

Paula Scanlan

December 19, 2023

NCAA President, Governor Charlie Baker
The National Collegiate Athletic Association
700 W. Washington Street
P.O. Box 7110
Indianapolis, IN 46206-6222

Dear Governor Baker,

My name is Paula Scanlan, and I am a 2022 graduate of the University of Pennsylvania where I was a member of the Women's Swimming and Diving Team. I am writing to you to share my experience as a teammate of Lia (formerly Will) Thomas and to request an opportunity to meet with you regarding the NCAA's policy on biological males in women's sports.

As you know, in September 2021, Thomas switched from the Penn Men's Team to the Penn Women's Team. While on the men's team, Thomas had personal best times in every freestyle event that were faster than those of the Women's World Record holders. Once the season began, Thomas was leading the country in multiple events. Thomas later became an NCAA Champion in the 500-yard freestyle, the first NCAA champion in the Penn women's team history.

From the beginning, I was concerned about allowing Thomas to compete on the Women's side. I was concerned not just with fair competition and trophies, but also with equal opportunity. Because what many people do not realize is that every time Thomas raced, a girl lost a lane in the pool. And every time Thomas traveled to an away meet on behalf of Penn, a girl on the team was asked to stay home. It is not just Riley Gaines and the girls who raced Thomas who lost out. There are many, many girls who lost opportunities to race at the next level or even to compete at all because Thomas was allowed in the women's division.

Another concern I had with Thomas joining the Women's Team involved privacy. As you may have read, my teammates and I were forced to undress alongside Thomas, who was at that time fully-intact with male genitalia. This occurred not just once or twice but 18 times per week.

This was extremely uncomfortable for me, as prior to attending the University of Pennsylvania, I was sexually assaulted. The swimming locker room had always been a safe space for me, a place where I felt safe. That is, until my university invited a male body to undress alongside

me. I began to have nightmares and mentally had to relive my own attack every week that I changed in that locker room. Many of us dealt with our discomfort by changing in bathroom stalls or using the family bathroom. When we tried to voice our concern to the Athletic Department, we were told that sharing the locker room with Thomas was non-negotiable. We were told that we were the ones with the problem. And we were offered psychological services to re-educate us to becoming comfortable with the idea of undressing in front of a male.

As the father of a former female athlete, I hope you can understand how truly humiliating and uncomfortable this whole experience was for my teammates and me.

Governor Baker, I know that you have a reputation for listening to different perspectives on all issues. And I know that you have met with over a thousand student athletes since taking the helm at the NCAA. The vast (silent) majority of female NCAA athletes have serious concerns about the NCAA's current policy on transgender athletes in women's sports but many are too afraid to say so aloud. Won't you please take the time to meet with those of us who are willing to give voice to these women?

Thanks in advance for considering meeting with me.



(A few photos I thought you might enjoy! (Left) Me at age 8 preparing for my very first swim meet. I had just joined my local YMCA team a few months earlier and I was very nervous! (Middle) This is me competing in a dual meet against Brown for UPenn in 2021, notably we won the meet after having lost to them both my Freshman and Sophomore years. (Right) This is me with my mom, Cynthia Chang, in 2022 at my final home meet against Dartmouth and Yale.)

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paula Scanlan".

Paula Scanlan
UPenn Women's Swimming '22
Email:

Cell: