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HIGH SCHOOL

Connecticut high school transgender athletes 'no longer want to remain silent' following Title IX complaint



By DAN BRECHLIN
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Two transgender high school track and field athletes responded Wednesday to a Title IX complaint alleging that the runners prevented other female runners from top finishes and potentially from college scholarships.

The complaint filed earlier this week on behalf of three female track and field athletes in Connecticut argues that the two transgender runners, both of whom were assigned male at birth but identify as female, have “competitive advantages.” The complaint seeks to overturn the policy of the state’s high school athletics governing board, the Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference, which allows athletes to compete based on the gender they identify with.

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[As Connecticut’s high school athletics transgender policy comes under scrutiny, here’s what you need to know »](#)

“I have faced discrimination in every aspect of my life and I no longer want to remain silent,” said Bloomfield High track and field standout Terry Miller, one of the two transgender athletes cited in the complaint. “I am a girl and I am a runner. I participate in athletics just like my peers to excel, find community and meaning in my life. It is both unfair and painful that my victories have to be attacked and my hard work ignored.”



Terry Miller of Bloomfield wins the 200 meter dash with a time of 24.47 in the CAC State Championship Track and Field Meet today in New Britain during the 2019 outdoor track and field season. (Mark Marko / Hartford Courant)

Miller, along with Andraya Yearwood, who attends Cromwell High, have been working with the American Civil Liberties Union as the complaint begins to unfold. Miller won the State Open 200-meter title for the second straight year in 2019 and won the Class S titles in the 100 and 200, as well as the New England 200-meter championship. Yearwood, who is also transgender, finished third in the 100 meters in Class S and fourth in the 100 in the State Open.

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“I have known two things for most of my life: I am a girl and I love to run,” Yearwood said in a statement. “There is no shortage of discrimination that I face as a young black woman who is transgender. I have to wake up every day in a world where people who look like me face so many scary and unfair things.

“I am lucky to live in a state that protects my rights and to have a family that supports me. This is what keeps me going. Every day I train hard — I work hard to succeed on the track, to support my teammates, and to make my community proud.”



With her father, Rahsaan Yearwood, photographing from the side, senior Cromwell High School's Andraya Yearwood wins the 200-meter dash in 2017. (Mark Marks / Hartford Courant)

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The complaint was filed with the U.S. Education Department’s Office for Civil Rights on behalf of Glastonbury High track and field runner Selina Soule and two other athletes who have not been identified.

The essence of the complaint, is that the transgender girls are displacing girls who are cisgender (someone who identifies with their birth sex) as the runners advance through the postseason, denying the cisgender girls spots in the State Open or the New England championships, and thus chances to showcase their talent in front of college coaches or compete against higher level competition.

“I think it’s unfair to the girls who work really hard to do well and qualify for Opens and New Englands,” Soule told The Courant in 2018. “These girls, they’re just coming in and beating everyone. I have no problem with them wanting to be a girl.”



Selina Soule of Glastonbury shows her disappointment after placing 6th in the 100 meter finals during the 2018 State Open high school boys and girls track and field championships at Veterans Stadium in New Britain. Terry Merer of Burke won both the girls 100 and 200 meter races setting new state records in both. (John Woike / Hartford Courant)

Soule appeared on Fox News' "Tucker Carlson Tonight" this week, adding that she has received "nothing but support from my teammates and from other athletes."

Soule's mother, Bianca Stanescu, circulated a petition at track meets last year calling on the state legislature to require athletes to compete in sports based on their gender at birth, unless the athlete has undergone hormone therapy. The legislature did not act on the petition.

"We never got anywhere with the CIAC," Stanescu said this week. "The genders are segregated for a reason. They might as well just say women don't exist as a category."

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CIAC executive director Glenn Lungarini defended the CIAC's gender policy, noting that the organization reviewed the language with the Office of Civil Rights in Boston to ensure Title IX compliance and discussed the policy with Connecticut's Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities.

"The CIAC is committed to equity in providing opportunities to student athletes in Connecticut," Lungarini said in a written statement. "We take such matters seriously, and we believe that the current CIAC policy is appropriate under both Connecticut law and Title IX."

The CIAC policy differs from rules set up by USA Track and Field, which requires transgender athletes to undergo hormone therapy. The USA Track and Field rules, which mirror the International Olympic Committee regulations, are used at colleges in the U.S.

All states in New England, New York, Pennsylvania, and several others have similar policies as Connecticut on the high school level that allow athletes to compete based on gender identity or have a process by which the athlete can request to compete against the gender they identify with.

There are 12 states that are identified as having “harmful, exclusive or invasive” policies according to GLSEN, an LGBTQ advocacy group that focuses on equal rights in schools. Those states have policies that outright deny transgender athletes from competing against the gender they identify with, don’t provide equal opportunity or do not protect trans athletes under HIPPA or FERPA. The remaining 13 states have no specific policy.

Both Miller and Yearwood emphasized their pride in living in a state with protective laws.

“Living in a state that protects my rights is something that I do not take for granted,” Miller said. “So many young trans people face exclusion at school and in athletics and it contributes to the horrible pain and discrimination that my community faces. The more we are told that we don’t belong and should be ashamed of who we are, the fewer opportunities we have to participate in sports at all. And being an athlete can help us survive.

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“But instead we are being told to be quiet, to go home, to stop being who we are. I will continue to fight for all trans people to compete and participate consistently

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of excluding Black girls from sport and policing our bodies. I am a runner and I will keep running and keep fighting for my existence, my community and my rights.”

Yearwood added: “I hope that the next generation of trans youth doesn’t have to

fight the fights that I have. I hope they can be celebrated when they succeed not demonized. For the next generation, I run for you!”

The national American Civil Liberties Union staff attorney also issued a statement Wednesday, calling it “heartbreaking.”

Attacking two black young women who are simply participating in the sport they love just because they are transgender is wrong, it is dangerous, and it is distorts Title IX, which is a law that protects all students on the basis of sex," ACLU attorney Chase Strangio said.

"Efforts to undermine Title IX by claiming it doesn't apply to a subset of girls will ultimately hurt all students.”



Dan Brechlin
Sports Editor



Dan Brechlin was named the Courant sports editor in 2018. Prior to that he worked as the deputy editor of the metro desk, with a focus on politics. Before joining the Courant, Dan spent time at the Record-Journal.

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