

**U.S Department of Education
Secretary of Education's Commission on Opportunity in Athletics
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Testimony from Panelist
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In the world of physics, there is a notion called critical mass. Critical mass is defined as the minimum amount of radioactive material necessary to create a nuclear reaction. There are three key points to critical mass. The first is that the concentration and purity of the radioactive parts directly affects the strength of the reaction. Second, change is based on someone or something taking action and not by someone just believing change should occur. And third, once the nuclear reaction occurs, it becomes self-sustaining. Once the process of change has been completed, those radioactive materials will never return to their old state.

In 1922 IHSA's position was "that while healthy values are outcomes of boys programs, it is quite self evident that the health outcomes are in grave danger of being adversely affected in the case of girls athletes." Today the IHSA's mission is, "to provide equitable participation opportunities to boys and girls that enrich the educational experience." In 1996, through a strategic planning process with our membership, the IHSA addressed its position on equity. Today, our position statement on equity, which parallels the National Federations Statement, is, "equity is more than being in compliance with the law. It is a personal ethic. It is a spirit. It is a commitment to do what is right and fair for all programs, participants, schools, coaches, officials and administrators. It means creating an atmosphere and an environment where opportunities and resources are distributed fairly to all." Certainly IHSA's mission represents an attitude that has reached critical mass.

Through a strategic planning process, the IHSA has been able to review its fundamental convictions and chart a course for the future. The IHSA has assessed its programs in the area of benefits, services and promotion, made recommendations to the Board of Directors to level up areas, passed new by-laws and developed new policies to reflect our beliefs. It would have been easy for our association at one point to be comfortable. We were doing good enough. But as we also found out, we had more to do. We hope that through our example and leadership that our schools too will look at their own programs and ask the question, "is good enough, enough?" In 1996 IHSA conducted a statewide survey. What we found was that 90% of high school athletic directors in Illinois believe we should function free from discrimination on the basis of sex. 95% believe that athletics and activities are an integral part of education. 76% of the athletic directors agree that parents are concerned about equal treatment of boys and girls and 71% believe that females are interested in sports. Additionally, 72% believe that we need to continue to pursue female coaches to fill vacancies in girl's sports, but 56% believe coaches of the same sport can be compensated differently based on pressure. Ironically, 87% of the athletic directors believe they are offering equitable programs to boys and girls but 37% of them are not willing to swap benefits, services and facilities. Is good enough, enough?

In 1997, IHSA participated in a statewide survey to assess gender equity activities on Title IX and the Illinois Sex Equity Rules to see how our Illinois school districts were doing. The study was developed for the Illinois Gender Equity Commission by Girl's Count and was called "Project Fair Play." We know from our study that in schools that offer more sports for girls, the greater number of girl's request sports. In schools that offer more sports for girls, the greater the equity of boys and girls athletic scholarships, the fairer the treatment in the classroom and the lower the risk of sexual harassment in the school.

We found that 75% of the districts were not significantly in compliance with Title IX when asked questions about their written policies, their designating a Title IX coordinator, their informing students and parents about the grievance procedures and their rights.

We found that 61% of the districts were reviewing athletic policies to ensure that when they offered team sports, equal opportunity was provided, that equal access to intramurals was provided, that athletic interest surveys were conducted and that they reviewed program resource allocation and compensation plans.

Overall, what the Illinois Gender Equity Commission found is that compliance with Title IX can improve the climate and opportunity for girls. Schools are making strides. What schools need to continue to work on is to evaluate programs and take action designed to create equity.

Today, we are here to celebrate the successes of our state, but also to send the message that there is still more to be done. Equity in our schools has not yet arrived. Schools continue to build a new reality that replaces the old order. Old myths have been replaced with contemporary ideas. At one time, we were arguing about whether or not we should charge admission for girl's sports. Today, hundreds of thousands of fans buy a ticket to follow the IHSA girls state series.

Nate Hampton from the Michigan State High School Athletic Association summed it up best by saying, "People go where they are invited, stay where they are welcome and appreciated. Every athletic director knows that if a student-athlete is provided a positive environment, has quality coaching where the student is treated with respect and allowed to have fun, competes on a fair and safe field, feels valued by the school while playing during reasonable hours, the student-athlete will be interested.

I am here today to celebration success. In the last 10 years 25,000 more girls have been provided the opportunity to participate while 5,000 more boys have too. Girls programs have been able to grow without risking the good health of boys programs. Know too that we have lost programs. Student interest change and naturally we change with them. For example, no longer does the IHSA offer a girls archery state series or a girl's field hockey state series. Instead those programs have been replaced with other programs like volleyball and soccer. Today we have over 698 varsity girl's volleyball teams, 664 basketball teams 634 softball teams and 325 girls soccer teams. In the last 10 years IHSA has added a boys volleyball state series, a boys and girls water polo state series and this year we will have our first boys bowling state series. Ironically by adding a boys bowling state series, more girls bowling teams have been added in this state as well. We also know that in Illinois girl's golf, girls cross country and girl's tennis programs are growing. In this state within the last 3 years, high schools have added 88 new girls soccer teams and 64 more girls bowling teams. You may ask how our high

schools have been able to do this. It has not been easy. But it has been done with a family philosophy. That is to say, if the family grows, everyone shares and the eldest does not get more than the youngest.

I grew up in a large family. We shared. When it came time to share a candy bar, splitting that candy bar became a real issue. My Mother had the answer. She directed one of us to split the bar while the other had the first choice of the piece. And we knew that if she told us to swap pieces, we would be OK with that.

Principals, athletic directors and coaches are the people that split the candy bar. I ask this commission to allow our schools to continue to close the gap between the 60,000 more participation opportunities that exist between boys and girls programs. I ask the commission to make sure that one day a girl can play on a basketball team and know she will have more than a 30% chance of being coached by a woman, more than a 2% chance of having a female official, and more than a 15% chance of being lead by a female principal or athletic director. I ask the commission to help us make sure that there is no excuse for why a girl must play on a boy's team. I ask the commission to help us make sure that the Friday night boys and girls basketball double headers being played in a few schools, become the norm rather than the exception when solving prime time playing issues. I ask the commission to help our schools change the facility differences between our baseball and softball programs. I ask the commission to help us make sure that coaches of boys and girls sports are being paid comparably. I ask the commission to make sure that all officials are welcomed and that they are provided safe and fair working conditions. I ask the commission to help us make sure that the benefits, services and promotions such as pep bands, locker rooms, prime time and publicity are provided fairly to every program. I ask the commission to help us make sure that never again will any girl or boy be denied the opportunity to reaching his or her full potential as a person.

For the last 30 years, together, our boys and girls, men and women, 760 member schools, 322,000 student-athletes, 12,000 officials would like people in this state to know how our schools have worked and made decisions that have allowed the opportunities for kids to reach their full potential. Our schools are teaching people how to truly play fair. And as long as our schools have pure and concentrated radioactive ingredients, ignited by a motivation that allows people to not only believe but also act, we will become self-sustaining. I respectfully request that the commission give serious consideration to the impact of their decision to not only the colleges and universities, but also the high school students who are the foundation and our future.