

Testimony for Texas House Bill 229
April 25, 2025

Dear Members of the House State Affairs Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in favor of HB 229. I am grateful to Rep. Ellen Troxclair for introducing this legislation. My name is Riley Gaines. I am a former student at the University of Kentucky where I was a member of UK's Women's Swim and Dive Team. I finished my career as a 12x NCAA All-American, 5x SEC champion, SEC record holder in the 200 butterfly making me the 10th fastest American of all time in the event, and 2x Olympic trial qualifier.

By now my story is well-known, not because I ever wanted it to be, but because it was necessary to share in order to restore sanity to the protection of women's rights. I am proud of Texas for taking early action to protect women's sports. But now Texas needs to take the next step in ensuring women are recognized as our distinct legal category.

I still hear from athletes across the country daily who are losing opportunities to men who claim to be women. This is unsurprising, and we are making good progress on fixing the issue of men in women's sports. What's more concerning is a new level of outreach I've experienced—women who are victims of our government's failure to define sex-based words and protect women's spaces.

I wish I did not have to testify on a bill to define 'woman,' but I do. Across our country today, including in Texas, females are forced to share spaces designated for women only—like prisons, rape crisis centers, domestic violence shelters, locker rooms, bathrooms, etc.—with men. When these women seek legal protection, your statutes will inevitably end up in court. That is why HB 229 is essential.

This bill would codify our common understanding of sex-based words like 'man' and 'woman' already used in 131 state statutes so when it comes to interpreting Texas laws that reference these terms, we are all speaking a common language. It would prevent judicial activism and help protect single-sex spaces and opportunities for the over 14 million women and girls in Texas. Texas knows what a woman is, and it is time its laws reflect that.

I implore you to please pass HB 229 to bring Texas in line with federal executive action to define the sexes and join 16 other states who have done the same.

Sincerely,

Riley Gaines