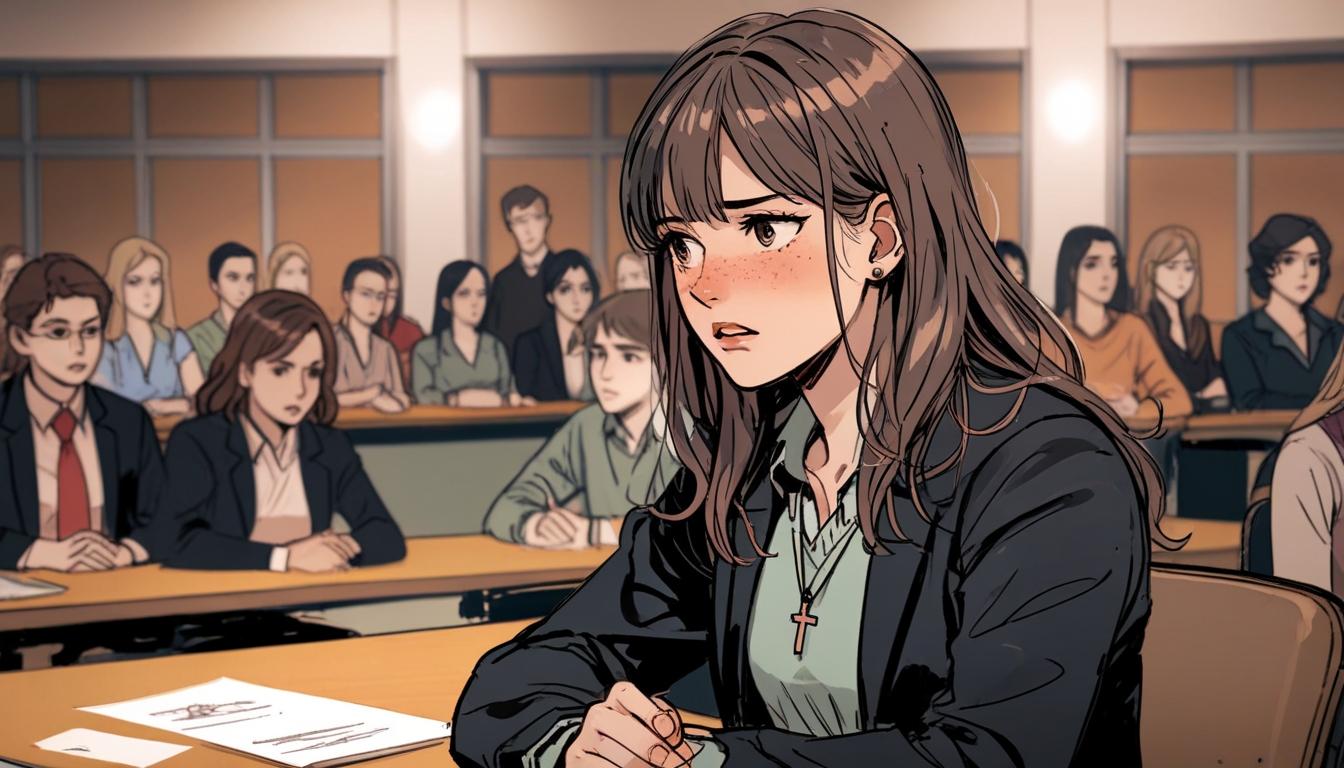
# High school athlete's protest highlights national debate on transgender participation in girls' sports



A recent incident involving a high school athlete in Arroyo Grande, California, has ignited a heated debate over transgender participation in girls' sports, highlighting a broader national conflict between California's progressive policies and the Trump administration's stance.

Seventeen-year-old Celeste Diest, a track athlete and junior at Lucia Mar Unified School District, spoke at a school board meeting on April 15, sharing her distress over the presence of a transgender female athlete in the girls' locker room. Diest recounted how the trans student, a male-to-female transitioner, entered the girls' locker room while she was changing for track practice. She described the experience as “traumatising” and accused the school officials of dismissing her concerns. During her emotional address, Diest said, "Adults like yourself make me and my peers feel like our own comfort was invalid, even though our privacy was and still is completely violated," according to footage shared widely on social media.

Her testimony was met with a terse response from Colleen Martin, the school board president, who asked Diest to “please wrap it up” as the young athlete became visibly upset. The video of the three-hour meeting rapidly went viral on YouTube and other platforms, sparking extensive debate about transgender rights in school sports.

Shannon Kessler, founder of Save Girls Sports Central Coast and a supporter of Diest at the meeting, told the Daily Mail that the incident has thrown California’s policies into the national spotlight amid a growing legal battle with the Trump administration. Kessler stated, "We have a battle between our state government and our federal government... The Trump administration is focussing on Maine now … and it's California next." She stressed that her stance was not against any specific individual but was rooted in the belief that biological females should have separate access to sports teams and locker rooms for reasons of fairness and privacy.

Kessler also highlighted the competitive disadvantage faced by female athletes whose podium positions and scholarships are affected by competing against transgender athletes. Diest reported that a trans athlete had outperformed her in a race last year, finishing ahead of her. According to Kessler, "If you have male genitalia, you have no business being in the girls' locker room and bathroom and competing against them in sports, because that's deeply unfair."

California law, shaped by a 2013 bill passed by the State Assembly, mandates that students be allowed to participate in sports and use facilities consistent with their gender identity, regardless of the gender listed on school records. The state’s Democratic Governor, Gavin Newsom, has previously described trans athletes' participation in women's sports as "deeply unfair," adding complexity to the state's pro-trans stance.

The Trump administration, on the other hand, has taken a firm position advocating for the exclusion of transgender athletes from female sports, based on biological sex. Since taking office in January, President Donald Trump has signed executive orders aimed at enforcing a rigid definition of sex in sports and other areas. The administration last week filed a lawsuit against the state of Maine for failing to ban trans athletes from girls' and women's sports, alleging the state violated federal Title IX anti-discrimination laws.

Attorney General Pam Bondi has indicated that California, along with states like Minnesota and Maine, could face similar legal challenges if they don’t comply. Defiance against these policies also surfaced in Illinois, where the state’s High School Association chose not to ban trans athletes despite opposing the Trump administration’s orders.

The Lucia Mar Unified School District, which oversees Arroyo Grande High School and approximately 2,000 students and 100 staff, has reportedly faced challenges stemming from these policies, including concerns about access to bathrooms and locker rooms by transgender students, which some community members view as crossing traditional boundaries of sex and identity.

Transgender advocacy groups maintain that athletes should be allowed to compete and use facilities according to their gender identity, a view that remains contentious amid ongoing national discourse.

The wider context includes 26 states with laws or policies banning transgender athletes from female sports teams, and collegiate bodies like the National Collegiate Athletic Association, which recently announced compliance with the Trump administration’s ban on athletes assigned male at birth competing in women's sports.

The Daily Mail is reporting that both the Lucia Mar Unified School District and the White House were contacted for comment at the time of publication.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.reuters.com/sports/trump-administration-orders-penn-erase-transgender-swimmers-records-2025-04-29/> - This article discusses the Trump administration's directive to the University of Pennsylvania to erase the athletic records of transgender swimmer Lia Thomas, aligning with the administration's stance on excluding transgender athletes from women's sports.
2. <https://www.apnews.com/article/decee6d555d61ac1a5462cf4d495db1c> - This report details the U.S. Education Department's conclusion that the University of Pennsylvania violated Title IX by allowing transgender swimmer Lia Thomas to compete on its women's team, reflecting the administration's enforcement of policies against transgender participation in women's sports.
3. <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-says-upenns-transgender-policy-illegal-demands-return-athletic-awards-2025-04-28/> - This article covers the U.S. Education Department's determination that the University of Pennsylvania's policies permitting transgender athletes to compete on women's sports teams violate federal anti-discrimination laws, highlighting the administration's actions against transgender participation in women's sports.
4. <https://www.apnews.com/article/e28abfe4d507086633e5f83b94b095e6> - This piece reports on California Governor Gavin Newsom's opposition to the inclusion of transgender women and girls in female sports, citing fairness concerns, and notes the criticism from LGBTQ+ advocates, reflecting the state's stance amidst national debates on transgender participation in sports.
5. <https://www.axios.com/2025/03/09/gavin-newsom-trans-athletes-democrats> - This article discusses the muted rebuke from other Democrats to Governor Gavin Newsom's comments on transgender athletes competing in girls' and women's sports, highlighting the political dynamics surrounding the issue in California.
6. <https://www.npr.org/2025/02/05/nx-s1-5282137/trump-transgender-sports-executive-order> - This report covers President Trump's signing of an executive order aimed at banning transgender athletes from participating in women's sports, providing context to the national debate over transgender participation in sports.
7. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14636719/teen-speech-fight-washington-california-high-school-trans-athletes.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data