



For the attention of Thomas Bach, IOC  
5 September 2019

**Dear members of the IOC Executive Board,**

This is a private letter signed by over sixty British Olympic medallists, world-class sports men and women, and leading scientists. We have come together because we share a single purpose: to help ensure the integrity and fairness of the Olympic games.

**We believe the IOC's revised (2015) transgender guidelines do not guarantee safe and fair competition for female athletes.**

**These recommendations are based on flawed science.**

IOC guidelines recommend that male-born transgender athletes demonstrate their testosterone level has been below 10 nmol/L for at least one year before their first female competition. However, there is currently no scientifically robust, independent research showing that all male-like performance advantage is eliminated under these conditions.

There is no list of reference works or papers that were consulted that can be made available to other researchers. It appears the only published research underpinning the guidelines is the unscientific, small retrospective study performed by two of the twenty members of the consensus meeting. The study size is tiny but the impact it may have on both women's sport and the Olympics is enormous.

**Put simply, there's more to male performance advantage than testosterone.**

The legacy effect of exposure to high levels of testosterone in early life and puberty is well known. Growing up male will give transgender athletes a lifelong edge that simply cannot be fully negated by a period of testosterone suppression.

Higher testosterone levels after birth mean males have larger hearts and lungs, on average. Females have a wider pelvis, altering hip rotation and making them inherently slower. Males have longer and stronger bones from puberty. Longer bones allows for increased reach and a wider articular surface, allowing them to put down more skeletal muscle. Muscle memory resulting from a male physiology prior to transition provides the permanent ability to regain or maintain muscle. Only females face the problems of managing a menstrual cycle and the effect on performance and training.

**Let's not change the rules without proper evidence.**

Such an important subject demands proper research of a significantly large population and using robust scientific measurements. Only then will we be able to have a true

understanding of whether a transwoman has an unfair sporting advantage over her fellow competitors. Properly designed intervention studies are urgently required to investigate the effect of transition on trainability and performance.

We ask the IOC to listen to other, well-informed voices and consider commissioning studies that look at muscle physiology and strength adaptations pre- and post-transition.

**These guidelines were never meant to be mandatory.**

We note that the guidelines were designed as recommendations – not rules or regulations – for sporting bodies to take into account. They were published after a consensus meeting of Olympic officials and medical experts in November 2015 in Lausanne, Switzerland, but they were not approved by the IOC Executive Board. However, they have now been widely used as the justification for opening the female category to athletes who were born male by most national and international sport governing bodies throughout the world.

**Therefore, we ask the International Olympic Committee to suspend its transgender guidelines regarding the eligibility of male-born transgender athletes into female competition pending further scientific study and analysis.**

If based on the IOC guidelines, the sporting world changes its rules prematurely and transwomen are found to unfairly dominate, it will be to the detriment of sport, women and the Olympics.

Signatories:

Sharron Davies MBE

