

Testimony of

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on

Promoting Women in Sports

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On Science, Commerce and Transportation

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Good morning, Chairman Stevens, Senator Inouye and Members of the Committee. On behalf of the state of North Dakota, I would like to thank the Commerce Committee for hearing my testimony.

My name is Lynette Mund and I am a teacher and head girls basketball coach at West Fargo High School in West Fargo, North Dakota. I am here today to testify to the importance of women's athletics and the struggles of providing athletic opportunities to young girls in rural communities. I will also discuss what I am doing to encourage more young girls to participate in sports in North Dakota.

Girls and women being involved in athletics has been a long discussed issue. Many questions have been asked, such as "Can girls' bodies handle it?" "Are girls mentally tough enough?" "Does it really make a difference in a girl's life?" I am here as evidence that the answers to the previous questions are all "Yes". The fact that I am in Washington D.C. testifying in front of the U.S. Senate Commerce Committee shows what a difference sports can make in a girl's life. Twenty years ago, I was a 12 year-old girl who was milking cows on my parent's dairy farm in rural North Dakota, and now I am here in our nation's capitol with some of the most influential people in our country listening to what *I* have to say. I have always loved sports, but I had no idea where they would take me and the confidence they would give me.

At age 13, I was a skinny 8th grader who was stepping out on the basketball court to start my first varsity game, and by age 23, I was a 3-time NCAA Division II National Champion and a college graduate from North Dakota State University who had the confidence to leave ND and move to the "big city" of St. Louis, MO. However, while I was in St. Louis, I always had a

desire to move back to ND and give back part of what I had been given. That opportunity presented itself when I was offered the head girls basketball coaching position at West Fargo High School. Being back in ND not only afforded me the chance to work with female athletes in West Fargo, but I was also able to continue working with young girls back near my hometown of Milnor, ND which has a population of 700 people.

As I stated earlier, I grew up on a dairy farm. I was a relatively naïve young lady without much self-confidence. I had always dreamed of going to college, but I knew it would not be affordable without a college scholarship. I remember standing out in the milk barn and hearing on the radio that a local basketball star, Pat Smykowski, had gotten a college scholarship to play basketball, and right then and there I knew that was what I wanted to do. Thankfully, due to the efforts of many great women before me, the chance to participate in college athletics was available; something my mother and many women from her generation never had an opportunity to do. My mom used to talk about wanting to play sports but not having the chance to compete. I sometimes sit and wonder how different my life would be without athletics. I wonder if I would have had the money to attend college, if I would have had the confidence to move away from my home state, and if I would have had the nerve to fly to Washington D.C. all by myself and speak in front of U.S. Senators. However, all of these things happened because I participated in athletics. As a result, I want to inform and inspire other young girls from rural ND.

One of the biggest challenges in rural North Dakota is that there are very few opportunities for athletes to improve their skills. That is why over the last 12 years, I have

offered over 40 basketball camps in ND and MN. I am proud to have given over 800 young women the opportunity to participate in their first basketball camp. For many of these young girls, my camps are the only exposure they will have to an athletic camp for the whole year. Over the years, I have had the chance to see some of my former campers continue their careers in high school athletics, some of which I have actually had to coach against! However, it was always worth it to see how far these young ladies have come and the confidence they now carry. At the time they attended camp, you should have seen their eyes when I told them they could have the chance to play in high school or college someday. Some of these girls did not even realize this was an option for them. By exposing these young girls to athletics at an early age, it allows them to see that sports *is* an option. This is relevant to the future of women's athletics because equal access to sports in college only works if girls have the opportunity to get involved in athletics at an early age.

Getting these young ladies involved is even more evident when I look at athletic participation numbers for girls in ND. According to figures from the 2004-2005 North Dakota High School Activities Association, females made up 49 percent of the student population in North Dakota. However, only 40 percent of the student-athletes were females. It is one of my goals to bring this number closer to 49 percent. This is important to me because I have first hand knowledge of how athletics can have a positive effect on a young woman.

I have been very fortunate to coach camps along with a high school basketball team. This year, I have 3 seniors at West Fargo who will be receiving athletic scholarships and playing college basketball next fall. I have had the chance to watch these young ladies grow and mature

since their freshman year. They exude a confidence that was not there 3 years ago. They know they have the ability to do whatever they want in life and the self-assurance they will be successful.

By providing my basketball camps and coaching high school basketball, I hope that other young girls from my home state realize that there are many opportunities to participate in athletics, and even a young girl from a town of less than 1000 people can be a National Champion, a college graduate, and a successful, confident professional.

Thank you very much for your time.