

U.S. Senator Susan Collins
Floor Remarks
Empowering Olympic, Paralympic, and Amateur Athletics Act
August 4, 2020

Thank you, Mr. President. Let me begin by thanking my two colleagues, Senator Moran and Senator Blumenthal, for their tremendous leadership on the *Empowering Olympic, Paralympic, and Amateur Athletics Act*. I'm very proud to be a cosponsor of their bill, and this shows what the Senate can do when we work together to accomplish such a critical goal, so I salute both of them. This bill takes effective action to end the negligent behavior by some members of the U.S. Olympic Committee and the amateur athletic organizations that oversee Olympic sports that have, on far too many occasions, failed to protect young athletes from truly horrific instances of abuse.

Mr. President, right after the Larry Nassar scandal broke, Senator Feinstein and I introduced the *Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Assault and Abuse Act*. Members of the USA Gymnastics team gave powerful, compelling testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee about the abuses that they had suffered and endured. We learned more about the horrific acts—the crimes committed by Larry Nassar—against the members of the USA Gymnastics teams.

Our bill, which became law in 2018, required prompt reporting of every allegation of sexual abuse to proper authorities, and it is helping survivors obtain justice and protect our young athletes.

Senator Moran and Senator Blumenthal launched an 18-month bipartisan investigation into the failures of the U.S. Olympic organization. They found that these governing bodies also failed to protect their athletes from acts of abuse committed by coaches and other powerful individuals within their organization.

I am delighted that they have led the way and that Congress has continued to focus on this issue to protect the courageous young athletes across the country who have come forward to tell their horrific stories. This bill strengthens legal liability against the Olympic and amateur sports governing bodies for the sexual abuses perpetrated by coaches and employees, and it gives the athletes greater representation on these governing boards. It will also ensure that Congress conducts more systematic oversight, and it will strengthen reporting mandates for adults with knowledge of abuse allegations.

Mr. President, these young athletes who train to represent our country at the top levels of competition, and indeed those at all levels of competition, and those who aspire to compete, should never have to fear victimization by trusted coaches and sports officials. I too commend the young athletes, with whom Dianne Feinstein and I met, and whom have worked so closely with Senators Moran and Blumenthal, for coming forward. These survivors have told their stories. We are now going to make a difference for them and for future athletes.

I hope that this legislation will be enacted and signed into law very soon. Thank you, Mr. President.

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