Until being informed by a friend, I was not aware of Title IX. After researching about this part of the Education Amendments Act, I am very disappointed that schools and our society has not done a better job of informing people about this very important right. I feel I am a fairly informed and intelligent citizen, so I wouldn’t be surprised to find out that many other people are not aware of this act. Our citizens need to be aware of their rights, no exceptions.

* Molly

I first witnessed harassment in the schools when I started middle school. My friends would tell me about weird comments they’d get from teachers that made them a little uncomfortable but it was never anything serious until it became constant, and they were forced to report it. I was first victim to harassment when a teacher at school would compliment my body and constantly remind me that I’m “a pretty girl”, that “whoever gets to marry me is a very lucky man”, and that he wouldn’t be surprised if all the boys made “goo-goo eyes” at me. I reported him simply because it made me uncomfortable. I was told that the teacher would be spoken to, and that it would be taken care of. However, I made sure to stay away from him to prevent further confrontation. I never got clarification that he was warned or anything. From then on I was hyper-aware and worried of who was around me every day for the rest of that year. It upsets me that there are teachers and staff out there in high schools who feel that it is okay to behave inappropriately towards students. I speak on behalf of myself and any other student that has been harassed when I say we want to feel safe, secure, and protected while we go to school.

* Linda

As a female athlete, I have benefitted from that side of Title IX since I was a kid, but it was not until high school that I faced the lacking other half of Title IX. As a high schooler, I have witnessed sexual harassment in my school and the terrible things it causes. I want my school to be able to help victims and have the toolset to properly handle harassment. The current system is not working; yes, on paper Hopkins has a coordinator. However, as a student I can say Title IX is not doing enough to help victims and in many ways is hurting their learning. I want students at my school to feel safe all the time and feel as though what they say is valued. By further educating Title IX coordinators statewide, all students can have a more carefree learning environment free of worries about reporting sexual harassment and instead have their situations dealt with in a proper and productive manner.

* Mary

Title IX is a policy name that every student has heard, but no one truly knows what it is or the rights it protects. Up until recently, I had no idea what it was about, or even that there was a specific person at our district meant to oversee it. Because of this, I know countless students who were sexually harassed and had no idea what to do about it. Do to this situation, they ended up with little to no justice. Creating a process to better educate Title IX coordinators will ensure that students have more access and knowledge of their rights, preventing situations like these in the future.

* Lizzy

The Title lX policy only came to my attention this school year, but I've seen how relevant it is too high school students and how sad it is that not many people know about this. I've seen countless cases of sexual harassment at school. At my old school, one teacher would always compliment girls and some people were weirded out. Others thought he was just being nice. It was not until he attempted to rape a student that he got reported, reprimanded, and served some jail time. But, it took something that big to happen for something to be said. Young girls are often afraid to come out and say something but maybe with the help of Title IX policy girls will know there are resources for these cases and that they won't have to see that person every day. School is supposed to be a safe place to grow and learn, some people may not always feel that way, but I hope the Title IX policy can bring us one step closer to what school is truly meant to be.

* Soliana

Schools have an obligation to protect the well being of their students. Incidents of sexual harassment affect students’ abilities to perform to their full potential, and may hinder their emotional and physical state. Ensuring that students both know their rights and feel advocated for is essential in moving towards a school climate that welcomes and excites all students. This bill would dedicate a Title IX coordinator at the state level who would offer training and support to K-12 Title IX coordinators across the state. This change opens protection and education to all members of the school: teachers, administrators, and students alike. Hearing the unjust stories that have happened to my friends as well as having my own encounters with sexual harassment in high school has shown me that this is a prevalent issue that truly affects too many students today. These changes are a first step in the direction of a more understanding and protective school culture.

* Sally

I am a survivor of sexual assault. I suffer from severe PTSD, anxiety, and depression as a result. PTSD has made getting through high school incredibly difficult, particularly because I still go to school with my assailant. I used to be the girl who had straight A’s in all honors and AP classes. Now, I am behind in most of my classes, unable to focus or study out of exhaustion and fear. I reported the assault to the school and while I prayed action would be taken, I was to be disappointed. Through the Title IX process, I was never clearly informed of my rights and was kept in the dark. I felt as though, through the school’s lack of knowledge, I was being victimized once again. It often seemed as though the burden of educating the school district fell solely upon my shoulders. In fact, a staff member told me that she found the Title IX requirements unclear and confusing, so students would just have to continue to be assaulted for the school to learn how to deal with it.

Madam Chair and members of the committee, I ask that you note with gravity that there are multiple K-12 faculty that deal with Title IX regularly, yet do not understand it. This lack of education and training is damaging to the mental health of students across the state. My experience with Title IX, resulted in worsened PTSD from constantly reliving my trauma. I had nightmares about the Title IX process, and many days I was unable to attend school out of fear or exhaustion from the Title IX meetings. I believe that there are better ways to educate districts on their responsibilities than to sacrifice the mental health of survivors. I implore you to recognize the damage done to students because of inadequate Title IX programs in districts throughout the state. Madam Chair and members of the committee, I implore you to recognize that my truma is not an expendable teaching tool. I ask that you take action to change these harmful proceedings within K-12 school. The bill in front of you would provide funding and training to Title IX coordinators within K-12 schools so that they can resolve these errors without compromising the mental health of survivors.

* Anna