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October 5, 2023

Hate Has No Place in Roanoke, Virginia

City leaders and civic organizations unite in support of the transgender community

Today a group of local college student-athletes will hold a press conference at the Hotel Roanoke and, according to their press release, “break their silence over a biological male joining their Division III women’s swim team.”

Featured speakers include 12x NCAA All-American athlete Riley Gaines, and former NCAA swimmer Paula Scanlan. Both Gaines and Scanlan will speak as spokespeople on behalf of the Independent Women’s Forum.

The Independent Women’s Forum is a national conservative organization with a documented history of anti-transgender activism, including efforts to dismantle Title IX (the federal policy that protects students’ rights to participate in educational activities free from discrimination on the basis of sex) and sponsorship of a federal “Women’s Bill of Rights” that would codify an unscientific definition of biological sex and require federal agencies to use this new definition of sex—despite a recent U.S. Supreme Court ruling, in *Bostock v. Clayton County*, that “sex,” under federal law, is understood to protect people based on gender identity.

Other sponsoring organizations of today’s press conference include the Women’s Liberation Front (WoLF), a national anti-transgender hate group; and, Women’s Declaration International, a U.K.-based far-right hate group.

Gaines and Scanlan each achieved national notoriety for making personal attacks on a transgender college athlete. Gaines has traveled the country lobbying for anti-trans legislation at the state level, including laws banning transgender students from participation in school sports at the K-12 level, as well as restrictions on students’ use of bathrooms and other facilities.

We, the undersigned, as residents of the Roanoke Valley and members of the local community, denounce the presence of national anti-transgender hate groups and speakers, and we stand united in support of all transgender students, student-athletes, and the broader transgender community.

Signed,
Roanoke Diversity Center
Southwest Virginia LGBTQ+ History Project
Planned Parenthood South Atlantic
Virginia Harm Reduction Coalition
Joe Cobb, Vice Mayor, City of Roanoke
Peter Volosin, Councilmember, City of Roanoke

Luke Priddy, Councilmember, City of Roanoke

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