



April 27, 2011

Attn: Committee on Women's Athletics
The National Collegiate Athletic Association
700 W. Washington Street
P.O. Box 6222
Indianapolis, Indiana 46206-6222

Dear Committee on Women's Athletics,

The Southwest Women's Law Center (SWLC) is based in Albuquerque, New Mexico and works to create opportunities for women and girls to realize their full economic and personal potential. We are aware of the efforts underway by USA Cheer to add STUNT as an NCAA emerging sport. Their initiative to place STUNT on the emerging sport list is important, as it will provide additional opportunities for women to participate in athletics and derive the important educational benefits that come with participating in intercollegiate athletics. It is also important because it will help to reinforce the difference between STUNT and competitive cheer. In New Mexico, as in many other states, cheerleading has been identified as a "sport" at the high school level, even though it does not offer the same types of competitive athletics opportunities as other recognized sports.

The Southwest Women's Law Center works at the intersection of gender discrimination, poverty, and health care access. Athletics equity for girls in New Mexico middle schools and high schools are one of our major programmatic priorities. In 2009, the SWLC initiated and led efforts to support legislation, the New Mexico School Athletics Equity Act, Sections 22-31-1 through 22-31-6 NMSA, (SAEA), which requires high schools and middle schools in New Mexico to report the number of participants in athletics by gender, and the funding and financial support of the schools' athletic teams. To implement that law, SWLC has been working with the New Mexico Activities Association (NMAA) to ensure that the reporting is thorough and accurate. The first round of reports are due in August 2011.

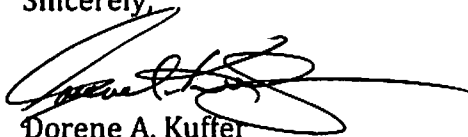
Upon the enactment of the SAEA, and because of concerns around participation rates, the NMAA voted to make "Cheer" a sport in New Mexico high schools. The NMAA is now looking to implement STUNT as a sport for New Mexico girls. We believe that STUNT would be closer to a competitive sport than cheerleading is. Therefore we applaud efforts by the NCAA to recognize the differences between cheer and STUNT. The acceptance of STUNT as an emerging sport at the college level may encourage high schools to take a look at title IX compliance issues around the use of "Cheer" as a sport.

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That being said, the SWLC believes that the expansion of sports participation opportunities for female student-athletes is needed to continue to improve gender equity in the NCAA and to realize the promise of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. Title IX's impact on women's athletic participation is one of the country's greatest success stories, but despite the significant gains girls and women have made since the enactment of Title IX, girls are still facing pervasive inequalities. As recently report in a New York Time's article and according to NCAA reports, females comprise 54% of the college student population but receive only 45% of all college athletic participation opportunities. The addition of STUNT as an emerging sport in the NCAA program could help to close this gap.

We fully support the efforts of USA Cheer to secure NCAA emerging sport status for STUNT and urge the Committee on Women's Athletics to approve their proposal for formal designation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dorene A. Kuffer", with a large, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Dorene A. Kuffer
Legal Director