

August 27, 2024

Dr. Angel Cabrera, President
Georgia Institute of Technology
Carnegie Building
223 Uncle Heinie Way, NW
Atlanta, GA 30332-0325

Dear President Cabrera,

There is one question that has come back to me over and over again over the last two years since I visited your campus as a 21-year old college student in 2022: "Why didn't you protect me?"

There are images in my mind that I cannot erase. I wish that I could erase those images, that day after day make me feel less safe as a woman. They repeat in my mind late at night when I am alone, when I am walking a City street by myself at night, whenever I'm feeling vulnerable, those images come back and the same question comes back to my mind, "Why didn't you protect me?"

Dr. Cabrera, of all people you could have protected me. Not only are you the powerful President of Georgia Tech University, you understand biology and science; you are on the Board of the National Geographic Society. You are a world-renowned scholar and a man of global influence, a member of the Council on Foreign Relations. You have won awards from the World Economic Forum and served on the Board of a Federal Reserve Bank. You, of all people, could have protected me and more than three hundred young women like me who came to your campus for one of the most momentous events of our lives. You could have protected us, but you did not, and I frequently ask myself, "Why?"

Dr. Cabrera, you knew that a 6'4" fully intact man was coming to compete against me, my teammates, and my competitors in the 2022 NCAA Division I Women's Swimming & Diving National Championships. Do you have a daughter? You could have stopped it, you could have at least said, "not here, not on the campus of Georgia Tech University," but you did not. You had the chance at the outset to bring a sane, rational, science-based, perspective to the protection of women's sport, but you looked the other way, and you did nothing. Why didn't you intervene?

The scientific evidence for immense male performance advantages in sport is overwhelming- I don't have to explain that to you or this committee, but you ignored the science to the harm of women.

Your Georgia Tech University officials knew a naked adult man with full male genitalia was being authorized by Georgia Tech University to share a locker room with hundreds of college coeds who would themselves be naked, unable to hide, unable to protect our privacy. This was intentional, premeditated, sexual harassment, and it happened right here, in the capitol city of the State of Georgia, just a few blocks away the grounds of Georgia Tech University.

Because you did nothing, that man walked into the women's locker room at your university and saw me undressed down to nothing. I did not even know he had access to the women's locker room until I heard a man's voice and turned around and saw him a few feet in front of me, and I was unclothed. You allowed college women to be traumatized on your campus in this way. Why didn't you protect me? Why didn't you protect us?

Don't you understand how important sport is to women? Don't you understand that to get to the NCAA Championships we devote our blood, sweat and tears for years, training to shave hundreds of seconds off our time, for one shot at being an All-American? Personally, I think you do understand these things, but for some reason they were not important to you. Inclusivity mattered more than safety and fairness.

You knew we lost the opportunity to have an NCAA Championships in 2021, we were the victims of COVID. We had already been robbed once in my collegiate career.

So, the best collegiate female swimmers and divers- the best in the world- came to Georgia Tech University in 2022 and you, hand-in-hand with the NCAA, the IOC, USA Swimming, and Democratic Party leadership, made us the victims of harassment and discrimination against women. You made us the victims of a cruel, traumatizing, psychological experiment that pretends that it is fair for a man to take from women, that pretends it is normal for a man to be given access to a woman's safe spaces, and that requires women to accept it all without saying anything lest they hurt the feelings of the man. Ignore the threat of men, ladies. Don't worry if a guy follows you into a bathroom. Abandon your instincts that something is off. Loosen your boundaries, stay quiet, and get undressed . That's the message we received.

I do not understand why you, an educated man, a powerful man, a man who understands science and gives lip service to protecting the rights of women, allowed us to be discriminated against and traumatized so severely on your campus. I also do not understand why years later you are still supporting the same perverse policies in college sports.

It has been more than two years, and you have offered no public or private apology from Georgia Tech University or even on behalf of yourself. You have taken no stand against the ongoing perversion of women's sport in America.

Dr. Cabrera, when I agreed to testify before this Georgia Senate Committee, I understood that you would be invited to testify. I thought then that by coming to testify I would at least get an answer to my question, "Why didn't you protect me?"

But I am here, and you have declined to testify. Not only that, but I understand that Georgia Tech University under your leadership is resisting providing to this Committee even Georgia Tech University's written communications with the NCAA. So, I have a new question, "President Cabrera, what are you hiding?" Do you tell parents who are sending their 17yr old daughters off to college that the policies you have in place favor the naked man in their locker room as opposed to their daughters? That they could be reprimanded if they oppose or even dare question these policies out loud?

Dr. Cabrera, I do not want any more young girls to have to ask the heartbroken, despairing questions that come to my mind in the dark of night. But until there is change, I must keep asking these questions, until I have an answer, and until justice for women becomes the policy of Georgia Tech University and the National Collegiate Athletic Association.

With all due respect, Dr. Cabrera, I believe I am entitled to an answer to my questions. Not just me, we all are. The plaintiffs here. My younger sister who is an elite level athlete. My future daughter. I was a 21-year-old college student when I came to your campus, Georgia Tech University, in 2022. I did not choose to be here, and it is not the preferred path for my life to relive over and over what happened on your campus, on your watch. But I could not be silent.

I spoke out in 2022 not sure of the support I would receive, but as I speak out today, I can tell you there is a growing wave of women who will not be silenced, and they are looking to you Dr. Cabrera, wondering what you will say to us today. The world watches and awaits your response. My life has been forever changed by what happened at Georgia Tech University, but I believe there can be redemption. It will all be worth it one day, if little girls and young women in Georgia and throughout the country no longer have reason to ask the painful question still reverberating in my mind: “President Cabrera, why didn’t you protect me?”

Dr. Cabrera, do you believe in redemption? Do you believe what happened at Georgia Tech University in 2022 can lead to something positive for women? I and those testifying with me today believe that the past can be redeemed and we speak for thousands of girls in this country, including many who competed in the 2022 NCAA Championships on the campus of Georgia Tech.

Dr. Cabrera, will you give these young women hope? Will you move past the mistakes of the past to take a courageous stand for women today? Will you have the courage to break ranks with those who are knowingly shaming and hurting amazing and accomplished women who deserve much more than the silence and apathy they have received from the NCAA and a thousand college administrators for the past two years?

What happened here in 2022 was a bitter pill, but the story is not over. That difficult moment for Georgia Tech University and for women’s sports can be redeemed. Will you testify before this Committee and speak out against the NCAA’s anti-women policies? Will you provide a shining example to other college presidents, and embrace equal opportunities for women by resolving that eligibility in women’s college sports must be based on biological sex alone?

Dr. Cabrera, if you want to redeem the past and protect women in college sports today, you can take a momentous step towards a more just future for women and for humanity. Thousands of women across this country and hundreds of girls who dream of swimming for the Georgia Tech Yellow Jackets and more broadly who dream of competing in sports at all look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Riley Gaines