

Simone Biles

Statement for 9/15 Hearing

**SIMONE BILES STATEMENT
SEPTEMBER 15, 2021
JUDICIARY COMMITTEE HEARING**

Thank you for the opportunity to share my story with this Committee, and for bringing light to the crisis of abuse in amateur sports. Your commitment to ensuring the safety of gymnasts, and all amateur athletes is appreciated, important, and necessary to ensure that nothing like this ever happens again. Please bear with me. To be perfectly honest, I can imagine no place that I would be less comfortable right now than sitting here in front of you, sharing these comments.

My name is Simone Biles, and I am a gymnast who has trained at all levels of the sport. As an elite gymnast, I have had the honor to represent the United States of America in multiple international competitions including World Championships and the Olympic Games. Over the course of my gymnastics career, I have won 25 World Championship medals and 7 Olympic medals for Team USA. That record means so much to me, and I am proud of my representation of this Nation through gymnastics.

I am also a survivor of sexual abuse. And I believe without a doubt that the circumstances that led to my abuse and allowed it to continue, are directly the result of the fact that the organizations created by Congress to oversee and protect me as

an athlete – USA Gymnastics (USAG) and the United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee (USOPC) – failed to do their jobs.

Nelson Mandela once said, “there can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children.” It is the power of that statement that compels and empowers me to be here in front of you today. I do not want another young gymnast, Olympic athlete, or any individual to experience the horror that I and hundreds of others have endured before, during, and continuing to this day in the wake of the Larry Nassar abuse. To be clear, I blame Larry Nassar, and I also blame an entire system that enabled and perpetuated his abuse.

USA Gymnastics and the United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee knew that I was abused by their official team doctor long before I was ever made aware of their knowledge. In May of 2015, Rhonda Faehn, the former head of the USA Gymnastics Women’s program was told by my friend and teammate, Maggie Nichols, that she suspected I, too, was a victim. I didn’t understand the magnitude of what all was happening until the *Indianapolis Star* published its report on the eve of the 2016 Rio Olympics, entitled “A Blind Eye Towards Sex Abuse: How USA Gymnastics Failed to Report Cases.” Yet, while I was a member of the 2016 US Olympic team, neither USAG, USOPC, nor the FBI ever contacted me or my

parents. While others had been informed, and investigations were ongoing, I have been left to wonder why I was not told until after the Rio Games.

This is the largest case of sexual abuse in the history of American sport. And although there has been a fully independent investigation of the FBI's handling of the case, neither USAG nor USOPC, have ever been made the subject of the same level of scrutiny. These are the very entities entrusted with the protection of our sport and our athletes, and yet it feels like questions of responsibility and organizational failures remain unanswered. As you pursue the answers to those questions, I ask that your work be guided by the same question that Rachel Denhollander and many others have asked: "How Much Is a Little Girl Worth?" -

I sit before you today to raise my voice so that no little girl must endure what I, the athletes at this table, and the countless others who needlessly suffered under Nassar's guise of medical treatment, which we continue to endure today. We suffered and continue to suffer because no one at the FBI, USAG or the USOPC did what was necessary to protect us. We have been failed, and we deserve answers. - Nassar is where he belongs, but those who enabled him deserve to be held accountable. If they are not, I am convinced that this will continue to happen to others -across Olympic Sports. In reviewing the OIG's Report, it truly feels like the

FBI turned a blind eye to us and went out of its way to help protect USAG and the USOPC. A message needs to be sent: If you allow a predator to harm children, the consequences will be swift and severe. Enough is enough.

I will close with one final thought. The scars of this horrific abuse continue to live with all of us. As the lone competitor in the recent Tokyo Games who was a survivor of this horror, I can assure you that the impacts of this man's abuse are not over or forgotten. The announcement in the spring of 2020 that the Tokyo Games were to be postponed for a year meant that I would go to the gym, to training, to therapy, living daily among the reminders of this story for another 365 days. As I have stated in the past, one thing that helped push me each and every day, was the goal of not allowing this crisis to be ignored. I worked incredibly hard to make sure that my presence could help maintain a connection between the failures and the competition at Tokyo 2020. That has proven to be an exceptionally difficult burden for me to carry, particularly when required to travel to Tokyo without the support of any of my family. I am a strong individual and I will persevere, but I never should have been left alone to suffer the abuse of Larry Nassar. And the only reason I did, was because of the failures that lie at the heart of the abuse that you are now asked to investigate.

Again, I appreciate the opportunity to share my thoughts with this Committee today. I want to sincerely thank each of you for joining the survivors of this abuse to do whatever we all can to prevent anything like this from ever happening again. Thank you.