



The Legal Aid Society  
EMPLOYMENT LAW CENTER

## **Female Athletes File Suit Against Alhambra School District and the City of Alhambra for Unfair Treatment**

(ALHAMBRA CITY, Calif., March 4) A group of female Alhambra High School students filed a class-action suit today against the Alhambra School District and several officials, alleging that their high school unfairly favored boys' sports over girls' sports by giving the boys more athletic equipment, facilities, resources, and opportunities.

The female athletes also allege that the City of Alhambra discriminated against them by spending \$900,000 to upgrade fields with state-of-the art amenities and permitted only boys' teams to use them. Meanwhile, the girls' teams play on a small, vastly inferior dirt field, and are assigned to a single locker room with broken toilets and non-working showers.

"The girls' softball field is horrible – there's trash everywhere and we have to clean it up ourselves," said lead plaintiff Lauren Cruz, a sophomore softball player. "It's upsetting to us because we know that the boys have a great field."

The students are suing for injunctive relief under Title IX of the 1972 Education Amendments, which bars sex discrimination in education, including athletic programs, as well as other federal and state laws barring sex discrimination. They demand that the school and city officials immediately implement an affirmative plan to remedy the disparities.

"While the majority of Title IX cases are filed against colleges, the most egregious discrimination occurs at the K-12 level, to younger athletes who lack the political clout to object," said Nancy Solomon, Senior Staff Attorney at the California Women's Law Center. "This case is a wake-up call to school officials throughout California. Girls are no longer going to remain silent when faced with this sort of discrimination."

"Across the board at the high school level, girls' softball teams don't get the same treatment, budget or facilities as boys' baseball," said Sue Enquist, UCLA's Head Softball Coach. "There hasn't been the accountability at the high school level as there has been at the NCAA level."

Athletic coaching for girls at Alhambra High lags far behind coaching for boys. The coaches for the boys' teams are nearly all full-time teachers who offer the boys training throughout the year. Coaches for girls' sports are hired on an *ad hoc* basis, and cannot offer year-round training.

“The girls are treated as nothing more than a nuisance,” said former head softball coach Tom O’Dell. “If the school administration had their way, they wouldn’t be providing anything to female athletes.”

“Girls who play sports are healthier, more confident girls. With the skills and leadership they develop through athletics, girls are more likely to achieve academically and professionally,” said Pat Shiu, Director of the Gender Equity Program at the Legal Aid Society - Employment Law Center. “The neglect by the school district and the city not only violate these girls’ civil rights, but threatens their future opportunities in college and in the workforce.”

Title IX is supported by research indicating that:

- participation in high school sports significantly increases girls’ self-esteem, academic performance, and employment readiness
- teenage girls who play sports are half as likely to become pregnant than girls who do not play sports and are much more likely to graduate from high school and college.

The students are represented by Nancy Solomon and Vicky Barker of the California Women’s Law Center in Los Angeles and Pat Shiu, Claudia Center, and Elizabeth Kristen of the Legal Aid Society - Employment Law Center in San Francisco. The suit was filed in Los Angeles Federal District Court.

A copy of the complaint will be available on the CWLC and LAS-ELC’s websites (listed below) on Thursday, March 4.

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