

Jordyn Wieber Statement, US Senate Commerce Committee Subcommittee Hearing 4/18/18

Good afternoon Chairman Moran, Ranking Member Blumenthal and members of the Committee. Thank for the opportunity to speak to you today.

I thought that training for the Olympics would be the hardest thing I would ever do. But in fact, the hardest thing I've had to do is process that I am a victim of Larry Nassar. It has caused me to feel shame and confusion. I spent months trying to think back on my experience and wonder how I didn't know what was happening to me and how I was betrayed by Larry Nassar and everyone at USA Gymnastics and the US Olympic Committee – organizations sanctioned by the federal government whom I trusted to be on MY side.

I started seeing Larry Nassar at the age of 8, in my hometown of Lansing. He was the best gymnastics doctor in the world. Everyone at my club, on the US National team, and across the country saw Larry and everyone said the same thing. He was a miracle worker and he could fix anything. I was treated by Larry for any and all of my injuries from ages 8 to 18. It wasn't long before he had gained my trust. He became a safe person of sorts. To my teenage self, he appeared to be the "good guy" in an environment that was intense and restricting. He would try to advise me on how to deal with the stresses of training and my coaches.

At the Karyoli Ranch National Training Center our Olympic and national team athletes were motivated by fear. Fear of being treated as invisible if you didn't perform to their standards. We couldn't smile or laugh during training. We were even afraid to eat too much in front of our coaches who were pressured to keep us thin even though we were doing extremely rigorous exercise for up to 35 hours per week.

Bear in mind, this was happening to little girls as young as 9. This toxic environment was the perfect place for a predator like Larry Nassar to flourish....and he did.

Larry acted like our friend. He always had a sympathetic ear for complaints about our coaches. He would bring us food, candy and coffee at the Olympics when we were hungry. I didn't know that these were all grooming techniques that he used to manipulate and brainwash me into trusting him.

When I was 14 years old, I tore my hamstring in my right leg. This was when he started performing the procedure that we are all now familiar with. I would cringe at how uncomfortable it felt. He did it time after time, appointment after appointment, convincing me that it was helping my hamstring injury. The worst part was that I had NO idea that he was sexually abusing me for his own benefit. I knew it felt strange, but he was the national team doctor.

I knew that if I questioned his treatment I risked my chance at making the Olympic team or being chosen to compete internationally. After all, Larry was recommended by the national team staff and he treated us monthly at all of our national team camps. I had even talked to my teammates Aly Raisman and McKayla Maroney about the treatment and how uncomfortable it made us feel. None of us could understand it.

After I made the Olympic team, I suffered a stress fracture in my right shin. It was extremely painful to tumble and land using my legs, but I fought through the pain because it was the Olympics and I knew it might be my only shot. Our bodies were all hanging by a thread in London. Who was the doctor that USAG sent with us to keep us healthy and help us get through? The doctor that was our abuser. The doctor that is a child molester.

To this day, I still don't know how he could have been allowed to do this for so long? We now know he abused my sister survivor and fellow Olympian Jamie Dantzscher twenty years ago. Women at Michigan State University reported his abuse even earlier and they were silenced and ignored. If these institutions had done their job, neither of us would be sitting here today.

My teammates and I were subjected to his medical care every single month at the Karolyi Ranch in Texas. He was the only male allowed to be present in the athlete dorm rooms to do whatever treatments he wanted. He was allowed to treat us in hotel rooms alone and without any supervision. He took photos of us during training and whenever else he wanted. Nobody was protecting us from being taken advantage of. Nobody was even concerned whether or not we were being sexually abused. I was not protected. My teammates were not protected. My parents trusted USA gymnastics and Larry Nassar to take care of me and we were betrayed by both. And now, the lack of accountability from USAG, USOC, and Michigan State University, have caused me and many other girls to remain shameful, confused, and disappointed.

I'm an Olympian. Despite being abused, I worked so hard and was able to achieve my goal. But I want everyone to know that I am one of over 250 women and survivors whose story is just as important. Our pain is all the same. And our stories are all important.

The people and organizations who are responsible need to accept responsibility for the pain they caused me and my sister survivors. Larry Nassar has received his punishment. He will never see the outside of a prison cell again

Now it is up to Congress to hold those people and institutions accountable who enabled Larry Nassar and attempted to cover up his terrible crimes.

USA Gymnastics must be held accountable. The US Olympic committee must be held accountable. MSU must be held accountable.

My teammates and sister survivors have been through too much. No one should ever have to endure physical, emotional or sexual abuse for the privilege of representing our country as athletes. Now, it's time for change, because the current and future athletes do not deserve to live in anxiety, fear, or be unprotected like I was.

Thank you.