

Historic win for transgender powerlifters in Minnesota

JayCee Cooper, through Gender Justice, filed a lawsuit against USA Powerlifting in 2021.



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MINNEAPOLIS — A journey that began four years ago has now come to an end for powerlifter JayCee Cooper after a judge ruled that USA Powerlifting indeed discriminated against Cooper, who is transgender, when she was banned from competing in women's competitions.

"I feel mostly relief, I think we needed a win here and it feels good to get that," Cooper said.

For Cooper, the sport she loves so much came with thorns.

"I never even got a chance you know?" she said [in a video produced by Gender Justice in 2021](#). "No one should have to experience that kind of isolation and othering."

In 2019, Cooper, through Gender Justice, filed a discrimination claim with the Minnesota Department of Human Rights, against USA Powerlifting for banning her and all other trans women athletes from competing in women's competitions.

Then in 2021, the team filed a lawsuit against the organization in Ramsey County.

"I was fed up with the way that I was being treated, I was fed up with the way that my community was being treated and enough was enough," Cooper said.

With the ruling including a cease and desist on USA Powerlifting of all unfair discriminatory practices because of sexual orientation and a request for the agency to submit a revised policy – this is a win.

But it's a victory that's not easy to celebrate, for Cooper.

"After years of experiencing discrimination from USA Powerlifting, and the backlash that has occurred due to that, of course I have complex feelings about the sport," Cooper said. "But I think that this win – [it] is a representation of where we can move forward."

And she credits her predecessors.

"Marsha P. Johnson, and the Stonewall riots, and the plethora of Black trans advocates and activists throughout history – and the way they've led this fight – I am just one small piece that is built off of that," Cooper said.

In a statement. USA Powerlifting's president said they will be exploring options, including appeal. Their statement is below.

"USA Powerlifting has been involved in litigation in Minnesota involving participation of transgender women in competitive powerlifting. Our position has been aimed at balancing the needs of cis- and transgender women, whose capacities differ significantly in purely strength sports. We have received a summary judgment decision from the Court finding us liable for discrimination. We respectfully disagree with the Court's conclusions. We are considering all of our options, including appeal.

Respectfully,

Lawrence J. Maile, Ph.D., President"

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