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To Whom it May Concern:

I am writing in support of the proposed Developmental Program to support elite male and female high school runners aspiring to compete well at the highest international level; a level in which athletes strive to capture World Championship and Olympic Games medals.

At present, collegiate programs are the prominent avenue for running development in the U.S. This existing program has done more harm than good. I know because I experienced it firsthand.

As an elite high school runner, I received several scholarship offers. I accepted one and ventured on to dedicate the next five years to my academic and athletic pursuits. (I was injured most of my first year, so although I graduated in four years, I owed the university an additional year of participation). I did leave my college experience with a degree but it came at a price. As a distance runner, I was required to compete in cross-country, indoor and outdoor track. I was often required to compete in three distance events in Conference Championships. In fact, in 1985, I competed in the 3,000m, 5,000m and 10,000m events at our Conference Championship only to drop out of the National Championship less than two weeks later due to illness. My experience is not unique.

After my collegiate experience, I began working with Dick Brown. An astute physiologist, as well as an excellent, experienced coach, Dick agreed to work with me but only after I took the next four months off with no running. He watched as I ended my collegiate running years in a state of exhaustion.

Over the next several years, under Dick's training, I went on to compete at the international level, competing on several national teams in various events including the Goodwill Games, Pan-AM Games, World Championships, and the 1992 Olympic Games where I finished 7th in the 3,000m event. I was almost 30 years old when I made my Olympic debut.

The proposed Development Program offers a sound approach for developing young athletes without the cost that the U.S. college system imposes for many. It recognizes the importance of an education without the burden of the competition demands which often contribute to injury, illness and burn-out. It affords young, talented athletes the opportunity to develop their talents so that they may compete at the level of the many athletes throughout the world who are actually vying for championship medals.

I highly recommend Dick Brown to lead such an effort. I am one of the many athletes that he has coached to compete at an international level. His ability to coach medal contenders is evidenced in his work with Mary Slaney. I feel fortunate to have enjoyed a lengthy, successful running career while being coached by Dick. We worked together for over 15 years. He is extremely knowledgeable, competent, and most importantly, he has the "people skills" that have allowed him to coach successfully for the many, many years that he has.

I strongly support the implementation of a program that allows U.S. athletes to develop and compete more successfully at the international level. We do not lack the talent or ability of the athletes abroad, we have simply lacked a system that supports our athletes and one that readies them for competition at the highest level where they can challenge to be the best.

Respectfully submitted,

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