

USA Climbing  
P.O. Box 4043  
Salt Lake City, UT 84110  
board@usaclimbing.org

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To the USA Climbing Board of Directors:

Effective immediately, I resign from the Board of USA Climbing.

While I started my tenure with hope and optimism, I have now lost all confidence in this Board's ability to lead USA Climbing and steward competition climbing in the way this sport deserves.

I have served as the only gym owner representative since my appointment in September 2022. I know my departure will leave gym owners with no Board representation. However, for me to continue improving conditions for the competition climbing and the greater climbing community—the time, attention, and passion I devote to serving on this Board will be better spent elsewhere. If I remain on this Board, I will continue to have my perspectives dismissed and watch others get similarly ignored, sidelined, or even railroaded. I will be viewed as a troublemaker who refuses to toe the party line.

USA Climbing has core values that mirror those of a high-performing team, including **Integrity & Teamwork** and **Inspiration & Excellence**. This Board's first responsibility should be to model these values for its stakeholders and strive to function as a high-performing team. While I have respect for and have felt heard by some Board members, I judge my experiences—as should every USA Climbing constituent—on how this Board performs as a team. The way USA Climbing has navigated the recent challenges raised by the transgender athlete policy and the National Training Center project highlight how this Board continues to fail in upholding these core values, viewing them as inconvenient at best, impediments at worst.

This Board assumes that USA Climbing's constituents—parents, competitors, athletes, volunteers, and gym owners—have and will continue to remain too disorganized and disconnected to hold this Board and this organization to a higher standard. Meanwhile, the constituents who do care and push for change become disillusioned, quietly accepting mediocrity.

This Board has made on-going decisions to steer financial and operational resources away from youth climbing, which provides USA Climbing most of its annual budget. This disproportionate focus toward the elite levels of our sport needs to change. This Board has capitalized on the love so many constituencies have for this sport and for their own communities while at the same time denying them a voice in decision making. USA Climbing needs to stop hiding from the perspectives of its diverse, experienced, and concerned stakeholders. To achieve excellence, this Board should follow the example of this country's highest performing climbing athletes: demand accountability, rather than shy away from it.

I will continue to channel my passion within the community to support competition climbing in ways I will be proud of. At the same time, I know I am not alone. I continue to have great hope that our competition climbing community will rally together and build this organization into the one it deserves.

Alice Kao