

My name is Warren Craig. I am 28 years old, and I was born with spina bifida. Growing up, I was very active in sports. I played soccer, baseball, and golf. I was blessed with parents who were actively involved in making it possible to play sports. In soccer, I was a goalie. I loved playing the goalie because the goalie is able to use his hands to play the ball, and since I walked with crutches, I had a really wide arm span and was good at blocking the ball.

In baseball, I was a pitcher. I would walk out onto the field on my crutches, sit down on the mound, and throw the ball as hard as I could. I was very good at it, and it gave me a great sense of accomplishment. In order for me to bat, my father bought another metal crutch, cut it off just below the handle, and welded a bat to it. I always thought it was funny when I would get a hit, I had to run to first base with this heavy bat attached to my arm, then my father would switch it out for a regular crutch. I always enjoyed baseball, and the other kids were incredibly supportive of me.

When I was 13, the city I lived in had a meeting and decided that it was too dangerous for me to play, and I could no longer participate. My family and I were very upset at this decision, and I was left wondering not only why they would have done this, but what other sport I might be able to play. My father is an avid golfer, so I asked him if there's any way I could golf with him. He was unsure whether or not we could find the necessary equipment needed for me to play, but never wanting to tell me I couldn't do something, he told me he would look into it. The very next day, he came home with a Pride brand custom golf cart, specifically designed for adaptive golf. I really dedicated to practicing golf, and by my senior year of high school, I was actually able to beat my father in golf.

The approval of this amendment is, in my opinion, extremely important. Growing up, I was blessed with 2 parents that were adamant about me having the ability to play sports. They would not only approve of me participating, but would actively pursue whatever was necessary for me to compete. Most of the athletes in our organization, while they are loved by their parents, are not involved in sports because their parents are not as proactive. Their parents will allow and encourage them to participate, but only if the sport is readily available. That is why the amendment is so important to me. The work we have done with the ASPO has changed countless lives. A young man named Nathan, who was depressed, had a complete lack of confidence in himself, and felt like was alone in this world due to his disability, got involved in wheelchair basketball through the ASPO. After just one season, he has gained an incredible amount of confidence in himself, and is thrilled to know that there's others like him that go through, and overcome, the same struggles he faces every day. I could go on for a long time with similar stories like this.

My inclusion in sports growing up played a vital role in my success as an adult. It's gave me the self-confidence and strong competitive attitude that I need to successfully run my business- the East of Chicago pizza co. in Orrville, Ohio.

When I born, the doctor told my father that I won't know I'm handicapped, unless he tells me I am. Now, obviously that's not speaking literally, but my father said that it was the best advice he's ever received. My parents never treated me, or spoke to me, like I was different in any way. Your approval of this amendment for the ASPO will be a declaration to every single person that gets involved in our sports that the state of Ohio believes in them and encourage them to believe in themselves.