

Members of the Finance Committee for the House of Representatives:

My name is Monica Mendenhall, and I am Alayna Mendenhall's mother. Alayna is a 10 years old girl that was born with Spina Bifida. She was a proud participant in wheelchair basketball this year at Massillon City Schools. I am testifying on behalf of Adaptive Sports Program of Ohio (ASPO) and for the future of adaptive sports. I support Adaptive Sports Program of Ohio with the request of funding that is needed to continue what they have started and be able to grow and offer this opportunity to other school districts. I understand this request is large, but what this sum of money does - is priceless. These past couple months when Alayna participated in wheelchair basketball I believe it has changed her life, positively in multiple ways. First, she is physically stronger, especially in her arms. Her school physical therapist is amazed with how much her strength has increased, since starting wheelchair basketball. She explained on a scale of 1-5 Alayna measured at a 3 in November and in February she measured at a 5. Her therapists wished wheelchair basketball was offered all year around! Second, academically I have seen a big difference this year! She has been on the honor roll all year so far and that has not happened in the past. I have noticed that she has been willing to attempt her homework on her own then ask me questions, if needed. The academics are becoming more of a challenge, but I feel because of her new found confidence she is able to tackle some of the more challenging aspects of school and life. Third, I would say socially Alayna has become quite a butterfly. She no longer is standing in the back hiding or sitting on the sidelines, she is now front and center and eager to participate in events. Her classmates are amazed that she can play basketball and want to learn from her. She no longer considers herself an outcast and she has something to look forward to and can't wait for another season to start. Lastly, Alayna has grown emotionally over the last few months. She is no longer is feeling sad for herself and

asking questions about what she can do in the future. No mother ever likes to hear their child ask if they will ever be able to walk like their friends or why they can't play sports. As a mother, I have tried to reassure her that she can do anything she wants she will just have to think outside the box on how to accomplish it. She always gave me that look, okay mom whatever you say, but thanks to Adaptive Sports Program of Ohio, Alayna now realizes she can have a future with opportunities and that all things are possible. Not only does opportunities like these help individuals with disabilities, but I believe it shows the community the value that people with disabilities bring and what they have to offer and how we can make a difference. Thank you for the opportunity to testify and share our experiences we have had with Adaptive Sports Program of Ohio and we are looking forward to the future.

Sincerely,

Monica Mendenhall