

June 6, 2017

Chairman Oelslager, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Skindell and members of the Senate Finance Committee. Thank you for allowing me to testify today on behalf of Adaptive Sports Program of Ohio (ASPO) and for the future of adaptive sports. My name is Monica Mendenhall, and I am honored to be Alayna Mendenhall's mother. She is a proud participant of wheelchair basketball for the Massillon Tigers. Alayna was born 10 years ago with Spina Bifida and many other health problems that go along with the disability.

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 by offering this opportunity to other school districts. I understand this request is large, but what this sum of money does - is priceless. I believe that participating in wheelchair basketball this past fall has greatly impacted Alayna and changed her life.

When this opportunity was first brought to our attention I had no idea what wheelchair basketball was about. I asked Alayna if she wanted to go try it out, but she wanted nothing to do with it. She even went to the extent of throwing away the flyers from the school so I wouldn't see them. I asked her why she didn't want to do it. Her response was, I don't want to get sweaty, but I also found out she didn't think she was capable of playing. We decided to go watch a practice and eventually we got her in a chair that night. On the way home she was excited and couldn't wait to go back and she has loved it ever since.

Alayna 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 at the end of the season 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 was on the honor roll all year! 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 is no longer 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 more about how she plays. 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 feeling sad or hopeless for herself and asking questions about what she can do in the future. No parent ever wants 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 parent, 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.

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 all can make a difference. Thank you for the opportunity to testify and allowing us to share our experiences we have had with Adaptive Sports Program of Ohio and we are looking forward to the future.

Sincerely,

Monica Mendenhall