

March 10, 2016

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Senate Education Committee:

My name is Ray Petty and I am the President of Kansas Accessible Sports, a non-profit organization whose mission it is to promote, organize, and play adapted sports in Kansas; specifically wheelchair basketball and wheelchair softball. I am here today in support of SB470.

I was not aware of, nor did I ever play wheelchair sports in school – public school nor college. I had polio in 1950 when, as I like to say: It was the fashionable thing to do. I was always athletic to the extent of my abilities, or perhaps in spite of my limitation in running, but was never aware of the possibility of playing adapted sports, so I was always the first baseman and I was able to finagle a pinch runner in baseball or softball. I shot millions of hoops, but could never really play past elementary school.

But after coming to Kansas for grad school, and becoming involved in the disability rights and independent living movement, I started playing wheelchair sports. That was 26 years ago – in 1990 – when I was 40 years old. I've been playing and coaching ever since – playing less and coaching more, I'd add. But this has been my recreation, my exercise, and my community for over a quarter century. I've been President of the Midwest Conference of the National Wheelchair Basketball Association for a decade or more – time flies.

I can tell you quite a bit about fitness and about health promotion and about avoidance of secondary conditions. But today I'm going to ask you to trust me when I tell you that developing a program of intercollegiate adaptive sports in Kansas is a worthy endeavor. It is a Build It and They Will Come venture.

I've asked a few of my teammates and fellow wheelchair athletes to submit testimony – and I know you have at least 2 included in your materials today. These are from two athletes, Dustin and John, who both competed in the NWBA Collegiate Division, and of separate teams. They were written independently, without any coaching from me – I merely asked them to tell it like it is. When you digest what they have to say, I feel certain that you will be proud to support this bill, which can be the catalyst for many improvements in physical fitness and student achievement for students with disabilities in Kansas.

I'm reminded here that I need to say that wheelchair sports aren't just for people who must rely on wheelchair mobility 24/7/365 – but rather for people with lower limb paralysis, amputation, or limitation who cannot participate in sports which require running. There is a “handicapping” system which limits how many players can walk, how many have paralysis at various levels, how many have trunk limitations, and so forth. The result is that it isn't just the biggest, strongest, and fastest that make the team. There are roles to play and positions to fill just as there are in stand-up basketball. Teams are only allowed a limited number of “points” on the court or field. Sports wheelchairs for us ALL are just a way to play the games we love.

That said, I'd be glad to answer any questions you have. I've listed a few bullet points below for your information. I also submitted 2 articles about wheelchair basketball to help you understand the game. I have hard copies here for you to take and I hope you'll read thru them. But most of all, read the testimony from the athletes who played in college. Thank you for your time and consideration of this very helpful initiative. Like I said earlier, help build it, and they will come!

Ray Petty

- **GAO found that students with disabilities receive fewer opportunities for physical activity and sports participation than students without disabilities.**
- **Researchers with Healthy People 2011 indicated that since activity levels in adulthood are usually lower than during childhood, sport and physical activity patterns established during childhood form the foundation for lifelong physical activity and subsequent health and contribute to an overall quality of life.**
- **Studies also clearly establish that children with physical disabilities have greater activity barriers. They are often not encouraged to lead active lives and in fact this failure tends to lead to sedentary lives with greater health problems that may be avoidable.**
- **Parents whose children take part in these programs have reported that it has been nothing short of a life changing experience for their child. The other top benefits identified by parents whose children participate include:**
 - **The opportunity to play sports that the kids would otherwise never have**
 - **Reductions in secondary health complications resulting from sedentary habits.**
 - **The ability to work hard, participate in a group, set goals, & excel in sports**
 - **Increased motivation to get good grades, improvement in academics**
 - **Active engagement and friendship with other students, mentors, & coaches**

Here are a few photos which demonstrate that WC Bball isn't your grandmother's sport. My grandmother played "girl's" basketball at Baylor University in the teens – a century ago. She was barely 5' tall and unfortunately she never got to see me play.

Kansas Wheelhawks, Midwest Conference Champions 2014-15.



Clayton and Evan playing(?) at Mizzou.

Proof that I actually played the game!



Left below: Junior Wheelhawks from 2012-13



At right above: Some Wheelhawks play at Fort Riley with the Transition Battalion



Above left: Rob Egan with Kansan and former Wheelhawk Matt Bollig. At right, Matt playing for MU – it's just WRONG! Below, Wheelhawks halftime show at KU.

