

Dear Secretary Ferbert,

My name is Dustin Casey and I was a 5-year letterman in wheelchair basketball at the University of Missouri. I wanted to take the time to write you a brief letter about a bill that would grant funds to schools and kids in Kansas with disabilities through the use of sport programs.

I was trying to think of a phrase that would seem a little less cliché or one that has been seldom used before, but the only way to describe what wheelchair basketball and sports in general have done for me, is simply, they have change my life. Adaptive sports have changed my life for the better. Without access to sports or sports equipment that make athletics more adaptive, we in the disabled community miss out on so much that is being taken for granted. With that being said I thought you should be aware of what we are currently missing in our schools because there are no funds for adaptive sports and what would happen if this were to continue.

Sports are a great way to meet new people and make life long friends. Sometimes the only commonality we have in today's society is our love and passion of sports. Through competition, we gain respect, gain companionship, and gain the ability to work together and to over come adversity. We wouldn't be able lead healthy lifestyles or understand the importance of becoming stronger and independent. If you feel good physically, your body will have the strength to fuel the mind, which will lead us to become smarter and performing better academically. People with disabilities that have a higher education, will create new ideas and be able to perform jobs. They will lead more fulfilling lives and become even more productive citizens to the community they are living in. **Everyone can make a difference; the difference is not everyone is given the opportunity to do so.**

As you can see, there are many ways in which access to equipment and activities that are inclusive to everyone can affect ones life in a positive manner. When I was high school student growing up in Copeland Kansas, there was no wheelchair basketball, no tennis, no track, and no sports for me to compete in. I had a great physical education teacher and wonderful coaches who let me participate in various activities but it was nowhere near the quality that people with disabilities deserve. Leaving to go to college, was really my first chance at experiencing what it was like to have the tools necessary to become not only a top of the line athlete, but a better person both mentally and physically. I was lucky in school that my friends looked past my disability and let me play the sports with them. I can tell you for an absolute fact that this does not happen enough in schools and to the abled bodied students who see past us, I can't blame them because we have created this culture that if you are in a wheelchair or have a disability you are weaker and you need assistance. This cannot be further from the truth.

Playing wheelchair basketball in college, lead to so many opportunities that I am very grateful for. The list is too long for me to put in this letter. However, some examples are, traveling around the country, making lifelong friends, networking, and leading to better job opportunities. During my time as an athlete I have also learned valuable lessons. Wheelchair sports were able to teach me, leadership, responsibility, confidence, compassion, empathy, companionship, competitiveness, accountability, work ethic, respect, and the list could go on and on. This is really important to me and to many others, because sometimes games are more than just games. This affects our lives; I know that it has mine.

I am now living in Seattle, working for the Seattle Mariners. I graduated with a Bachelors and Masters degree from the University of Missouri. I have interned with the Kansas City Chiefs, and was the Director of Operations for the Women's Soccer team at the University of Missouri. None of this would have occurred without wheelchair basketball. None of these doors would have been opened without wheelchair basketball. As I stated eelier, its life changing, Help us and others adapt to a new way of thinking.

Thank you,

Dustin Casey