

## Testimony for HB 0573

Remember when you were in elementary school and you had recess? Remember how fun it was to run and play on the slides, swings, and climbing equipment? As you think about it, you might even be able to hear the laughter of the children playing together. Now picture a student who uses a wheelchair or a walker. Does this student feel the same way about recess? Does this student have a way to get to the top of the playground equipment? Not if the only way up is a ladder or steps. Does this student have a swing that is accessible? In most cases, the answer is no.

As an adapted physical education resource teacher and an adapted physical education teacher in a school building, I have spent my career advocating for students with disabilities to have what their peers have in physical education, recess, and extra - curricular activities. I have spent countless hours teaching my colleagues in physical education how they can include students with disabilities in their general education classes through professional development and one on one training with the teacher and student. When I think about playgrounds and the importance of just playing with your friends outside, I am astonished by how many playgrounds are not accessible. And those that claim to be accessible, actually only have a few things for students with limited mobility to play with on the ground. I am reminded of a cartoon I once saw where a group of students, including one using a wheelchair, are waiting to get into school and the adult is shoveling the steps. A ramp is right next to the steps and one of the students says, "If you shovel the ramp, we can all get into school." Many things strike me about that cartoon. The one thing that stands out the most is that the students are the ones who are educating the adults about what is best for everyone. In my school system, we had a group of students at an elementary school write a letter to the Special Education leaders in hopes of getting funding for a swing for their classmate who uses a wheelchair and could not play with them at recess. Again, the students advocating for their friends so that everyone can play.

When we think about access to playgrounds for wellness and healthy living, we need to consider all children, whether they run and play or roll and play. HB 573 will enable all children to lead healthy lives! I request a favorable vote for HB 573.

Thank you!

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