



Chair Alissa Keny-Guyer
Member of the Human Services and Housing Committee
Re: HB 2890

March 16, 2015

Dear Chair Keny-Guyer,

Since 2005, Friends of Baseball has been providing kids with opportunities for success on and off the field. We have worked together with our community partners to provide over \$2.4 million in programming, grants, scholarships, and equipment. We have served over 40,000 children since our founding.

According to an ESPN report, 3.5 million kids in the United States will lose access to sports in the next decade. Over nearly ten years of doing this work, we have learned directly from communities around the state about the gaps in opportunity that exist for children. Friends of Baseball and other sports-based youth development organizations are working to reverse that trend here in Oregon. Part of that work will require us to understand and reduce the barriers to access for extracurricular activities, especially physical education and team sports recreation.

Through our player scholarship program, our board receives first-hand stories from families across the state whose leagues or teams nominate them for support. We hear about children who just want the opportunity to play. These requests come from parents, grandparents, guardians, foster parents, and youth mentors. When we fund these individual scholarships that make it possible for these youth to play, we always think about the scores of other children with similar circumstances who we don't hear from.

Our organization is dedicated to keeping kids on the field of play through the sport of baseball and softball, because we know that some children are reached through this sport and learn lifelong lessons that serve them well later in life. We also know that children who play sports are more likely to finish high school and more likely to attend college. Every child should have the opportunity to explore what activities suit their talents, and more importantly, enjoy the camaraderie of playing and bonding with their peers.

With more than 8,000 children in Oregon's foster care system, it is important that we not consider extracurricular activities as "extra." Rather, access to these activities is a critical aspect of physical, social, emotional and academic development of the whole child. All children deserve the same chance to play.

Sincerely,

Friends of Baseball Board

Ben Longcor, President
Nathan Christiansen, Vice President
Sean Calhoun, Treasurer
Tommy Elrod, Secretary

Jason Dailey
Dan Floyd
Charles Ramsay
Rakeem Washington

Nova Newcomer, Executive Director

Signatures on file