

Chair Doherty and Members of the Committee,

I like to imagine that I can remember the day I hit my head clearly, but every time I think back to it, it's just a blurry picture. The accident happened the day before sophomore year began, and the only thing I can remember was how much of a panic I was in. My head was not only throbbing as it dealt the pain from hitting it but also thinking about what my teachers would do to help me as the year began.

Skip to halfway through the year, and no such changes were made from that first day. I had an invisible injury and because of that, teachers believed I was fine within a week. Despite a constant stream of doctor notes explaining what I was going through and meeting with them on a daily basis, no changes were made. My grades fell and I lost hope in trying, I began suffering in silence, battling to stay on top of the loads of homework thrown at me but the more I struggled, the further behind I fell. My symptoms began to only get worse as I never gave myself time to heal. Thinking back to it, no one knew how to help me. Doctors did all they could and I tried to advocate for myself as much as possible, but in the end, teachers don't have the proper training needed for someone suffering an invisible injury.

Two years later and I still suffer. I sit here with permanent brain damage and learning disabilities that prevent me from performing at the same level as my peers. My anxiety is through the rough as I try to handle the course load of a high school senior. I sit here struggling to read the words written down in front of me as I try to ignore the ringing in my ears or the lights blaring down on me. A concussion is more than just a one time injury. It's something that can occur to you once but leave permanent damage forever. My only wish for people facing similar things to myself is that people begin to understand what it's like to fall behind due to something you never even asked for. Ask a student what they're going through and check in, a simple jester will go so much further than one can ever believe. Knowing teachers and staff members are there for the students through thick and thin is the self advocating needed to make the recovery in the battle of invisible injuries.

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