



The Afterschool Place
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(701) 250-3109
“Your after-school solution”

January 24, 2023

Senator Brad Bekkedahl, Chair
Senate Appropriations Committee
North Dakota State Legislature
600 E. Boulevard Avenue
Bismarck ND, 58505

Re: Support Testimony Letter for Senate Bill 2012

Dear Chairman, Bekkedahl and Members of the Committee:

The Afterschool Place is in support of SB 2012. My name is Lori Sager, I'm a social worker and the director for the Afterschool Place. The Afterschool Place began in 2008. We provide positive after school experiences for students in the Bismarck community. Our goal is to support students as they learn to become outdoor kids. We do this through outdoor wildlife conservation, agriculture, art, and science. Field trips are an essential element to our after-school program. Inclusion is the key to the success of our students. It's how we learn, make friends, and experience our world.

Thank you for letting me share with you why we support SB 2012. We have 30 students. Three of our kids have physical and additional challenges. One student who we call "Pickle", has juvenile arthritis. On flare up days, his knees bow in, swell, and the pain makes it difficult to move.

It's a hard reality for a kid who loves to run, it's even harder to watch your friends run the trails at Game & Fish. Those legs just can't keep up on flare up days so then what? Thanks to the Inclusion Grant we were able to purchase an all-terrain wagon. The kids call it the "Beast". We call it inclusion, either way the Pickle can keep up with his friends. When his legs grow tired, he can hop in the wagon. There's always someone asking if they can give him a ride, "Pickle, we got you covered."

One more story I want to share is, Hedgie. Everyone has a birth story; some can be more complicated than others. Hedgie was born with spinal and brain traumas. Last August, she was ready for school. "Please don't treat Hedgie any different." Her mom asked. I looked at the tiny kindergartner who seemed to be all leg braces and asked, "Does Hedgie go sledding?" Her mom looked at me like I was nuts. It was 90 degrees outside. She answered, "No. She's never been sledding"

Thanks to our Inclusion Grant, Hedgie is now an experienced sledder. We were able to purchase a toboggan so Hedgie and friends could make the most out of the 50 inches of snow we've received so far. Every kid should be able to experience North Dakota winters.

Thank you for letting me share why the Inclusion Grant and the Specialists have made a difference for our families, kids, and staff. No one wants to be left behind.

Sincerely,

Lori Sager, LSW
The Afterschool Place
Bismarck ND,