

## LET THEM PLAY!!!

Our homeschooling journey began in 2020 like many others who were frustrated with our school system. Jameson and Ruby were nine and seven then, and now we're looking at high school in just a few short months. Both of our children started playing soccer for Crofton at age three, which is often compared to herding cats, but are now playing at the highest levels with private lessons and tons of travel. Jameson plays travel hockey and baseball and Ruby plays travel softball, county basketball and the newly established all girls flag football league. Maybe you saw the amazing NFL Girls Flag commercial during the Super Bowl. This new program hopes to be established in our county's high schools soon and will be an Olympic sport in 2028 in Los Angeles! Our family lives and breathes sports. Our kids want nothing more than to play sports every day and when they can't play, they're watching. They both have a strong desire to play high school sports and that led us here!

Jameson and Ruby have grown up playing recreational sports in our community and over the years have branched out to local travel organizations. Some kids from our communities play with them on these teams and some play for other clubs. The dream has always been for them to all be reunited and get to play together again in high school. They ask why they can't play and don't understand why they're not given the same opportunities as their friends and teammates. They understand that we do our school work differently than other families, but all families do things differently. They have friends and teammates in public schools, private schools, all different nationalities and religions, but they all share the same love for the sports they play. They know that their friends play sports with the same intensity and passion as they do, and they want nothing more than to be afforded that opportunity during their high school years. Over the weekend my daughter was practicing at the high school and mentioned again how badly she wants to be able to play there when the time comes. Crofton High School was planned, built, and funded with some of our money, but we are not allowed to play on their teams. This cannot continue!

Sports aren't just about practices and games. These kids are learning major life lessons that will help them as they grow. Leadership, teamwork, confidence, resilience, time management, goal setting, discipline, sportsmanship, decision-making, commitment and other qualities are needed to be successful in sports and in life. It's more fun and effective learning lessons in the sports world and being able to carry them into the real world. All of these qualities are being used here today by the members of the General Assembly to help make our state a better place and we ask that you give our kids the opportunity to continue to foster these skills during some of the most formative years of their lives.

Jameson has been playing on the middle school hockey team and will try out for the high school hockey team next year. Ice hockey is a club sport in our county, so homeschooled students are allowed to participate. Why must this separation exist? This tells me the problem is money. If this is truly the issue, then allowing homeschooled students to participate wouldn't change the financial aspect of sports as we already fund the schools without utilizing them and could finally benefit from that in some way. If others argue that kids need to make grades to play sports, that

can easily be explained. We also report to the county and are bound by COMAR, and are happy to share grades. The NCAA has strict academic standards for homeschoolers, so these students will already know what is expected of them to continue play beyond high school.

([http://fs.ncaa.org/Docs/eligibility\\_center/Student\\_Resources/Home\\_School\\_Toolkit.pdf](http://fs.ncaa.org/Docs/eligibility_center/Student_Resources/Home_School_Toolkit.pdf))

If the argument is that my kids aren't physically in the school building and shouldn't be allowed to take part in activities outside of the school building, that doesn't fly either. Our county has a Virtual Academy which involves learning from outside of school, but these children are allowed to play school sponsored sports. I just cannot see any argument for keeping MY kids away from high school sports. Please allow them to achieve their dreams! Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.