

Good afternoon, my name is Finnegan Hall, and I have been a Maryland resident since 2022, but I was homeschooled in the state of Missouri from third grade in 2000, until I went to college in 2007. I'd like to invite you to think about someone at school who touched your life, be it a teacher who inspired you, a coach who motivated you, an adult who listened to you, or a friend who was there for you when no one else was.

Now imagine if you never met them. When I was pulled out of public school, I lost those connections. My world shrank to my sister, my father, and my abusive mother. I lost access to mandated reporters who could have helped me. I never got to skin my knee on the soccer field, because I didn't have recess. I learned instruments, but I never got to play in a band. I acted out Shakespeare alone in my room, but I never got to take the stage.

Kids do not have a choice in how they are educated, but they do experience the consequences. Today, parents pull their children out of school for a variety of reasons, from religious community, to bullying, to fear of gun violence or other harm, but when they do, those children lose access to the structures put in place to educate and protect them.

When my parents chose to homeschool me, I lost the opportunity to grow and thrive. If the state of Missouri had offered me the chance to participate in public school programs, I could have explored the activities of my dreams. Instead, I spent my childhood indoors on the internet, because that was the only place where I could make friends.

By giving homeschooled children access to extracurricular activities, you open their worlds and give them the chance I never had - to be kids.