

September 7, 2015

To whom it may concern,

My name is Malinda Painter and I have transferred to Churchill High School from Willamette. I am asking you to please allow me to be eligible for the 2015-2016 cheer competition season due to the hardships I faced while participating in the cheer program at Willamette from 2013 through 2015.

It wasn't easy to leave my friends at Willamette High School but after being embarrassed by the school staff, having a coach unwilling to work with the parents and Athletic Director, and not feeling like our sport is important to the school, I knew it was time to find a new program.

One of my worst moments as a cheerleader at Willamette High School was when my teacher stood in the front of the room and said how she dislikes cheerleaders and that real athletes don't wear big bows in their hair. My teacher knew that there were several cheerleaders in her class, but she didn't seem to care. The school forced her to apologize for this, but her apology will never take away how I felt that day. I was made fun of by students, the volleyball coach told his team to avoid and not be friends with the cheerleaders, and the basketball team told us they didn't want us at their games. This made me feel like my sport wasn't important and that nobody wanted us around.

With all of the problems that were happening my team asked for the parents to meet with the coach, Athletic Director, and the Vice Principal. The Athletic Director offered his help to get us more involved, but my coach did not give us the opportunities to do so. We did not perform at halftime for football or basketball; and we did not participate in pep rallies or school assemblies. My coach actually said to drop the to-do list from the parent meeting, that she was worried about how it would affect her. This really disappointed me because after the parent meeting we thought things would change. The whole reason I joined cheer was because I wanted to be more involved in my school. My coach did know about these offers to perform and be involved, but had other commitments which made it impossible for us to do so.

While on the Willamette cheer team we also struggled with places to practice. We were eventually offered a location at Cascade Middle school. Willamette had promised to move our cheer mats for us, but they didn't. My team was forced to move these mats ourselves. These mats are extremely heavy and dangerous to move that far with no equipment, but we had no choice because we cannot practice without them. With practices now at Cascade, we received our schedules week to week. We already had major communication problems with the team, so this only made things worse. Things continued to get more and more difficult until finally we were moved out of Cascade due to an outside recreation league. We were brought back to the high school to the upstairs gym, but practice times were very limited.

I feel that after 2 years of being on the Willamette cheer team the problems had never been fixed, which ended up with me leaving my friends and my teammates for a new start. I am currently part of the varsity Churchill Cheer team, and couldn't be more excited for this season. I feel this was the best decision for me, I couldn't be happier. I have the most amazing coach, teammates and school. I ask that you please reconsider my eligibility for the competition Cheer season, all I want is to be able to compete with my new team.

Thank You,

*Malinda Painter*

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