

To whom it may concern,

I am writing this letter in regards to my daughter Amber Ihde, and her academic eligibility for the 2nd semester of this 2015-2016 school year. Although we realize that her grades were not at the level she & I would like them to be, I believe that is a direct result of significant emotional as well as medical hardship that she has absolutely no control over.

It is extremely difficult for me to put into words the struggles our family has coped with this past year. I will try to shed some light on these, with the hope that Amber is not embarrassed or ridiculed because I have shared these beyond our family.

A medical issue that Amber has dealt with since she was 9 years old is severe migraine headaches. There have been times that she has missed school, family functions and sports activities because of the severity of her migraines. Though she takes medication to treat the migraines, at times they immobilize her to the degree that her vision gets spotty, she experiences vomiting and isn't able to recover for quite a few hours.

Amber's biggest support person in her life was her paternal Grandmother Diane. Diane lived in our home after she retired to be closer to her grandchildren. She would help Amber with classwork, encourage Amber to push herself to be successful in school, sports & volunteer activities but the best support she gave to Amber was the ability to listen to her concerns without judgment. Amber would confide in Diane more than anyone else she trusts. Diane received treatment for cancer while living in our home, but eventually passed away from cancer. It is my belief that Amber has not fully dealt with this loss and feels as if she has very few people to confide in or help her in the ways that her Grandmother did.

After Diane passed away; Amber's father Mike, became depressed and turned to alcohol as a way to avoid dealing with the loss of his mother. Though it has not been something we talk very openly about in our home, I know that Amber has seen the struggles that her father has gone through while continuing to have chemical dependency issues. He lost his job in June, putting a financial hardship on our family and only furthering his ability to consume alcohol in order to avoid reality. He has since gone to counseling, and is working through these issues.

Through all of this, we opened our hearts and home to my nieces. DHS placed 2 of my nieces in our home because my sister was addicted to methamphetamines and could not care for her children. My sister was not happy about this and would often show up unannounced creating a scene, blaming my family and I for keeping her children from her. Many stressful days, sleepless nights and some tense times in our home meant that an element of chaos that we had never experienced before was developing to new levels. My mother also lived in our home, to help care for my nieces. My mother has diabetes that she hasn't quite figured out how to best manage and as a result is in the early stages of kidney failure. It isn't easy for

anyone to watch a loved one struggle with illness, but to a teenager the thought of losing 2 grandmothers in a short period of time is a lot to process. If I knew then, that the pressures and responsibilities that Amber was shouldering would adversely affect her in the magnitude that they did; I would never have asked for her help nor would I have expected that she could function at a typical level in school, sports or other activities.

It is my belief that these situations; though a part of life, were far too much of a stress load and out of Amber's control so much that she could not perform to the best of her abilities when it came to her education. She and I both know the importance of education in order to be successful in today's world and she is embarrassed that she was unable to cope under the pressure and stress that these situations created.

Amber & I are both dedicated to proving that she will work hard to achieve passing grades for this final semester of her senior year. I believe that she has persevered through some tough times, received help and pastoral counseling, and now knows how to use the resources that are available to her in order to keep herself on track.

It is my hope that you will consider the above circumstances when deciding whether or not to grant a hardship, in order for Amber to be eligible to play sports this spring.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Cindi Ihde

Amber Ihde

2.18.16

Hardship Appeal

They say high school is supposed to be best years of your life. Little did I know they could also be the worst. Most high schoolers are more worried about finding a date to a dance or whether or not their friend is mad at them. I did not have time to worry about any of that because in the last year I had my whole world ripped apart.

It all started when my paternal grandma, the person I loved, trusted, and looked up to more than anyone else, moved in. It was an absolute dream come true, that is except for the fact that she was terminally ill. As she got sicker I saw my world start to slowly crumble around me. First she lost her hair. Then she became a totally different person. The bubbly, outgoing, adventurous woman I idolized was suddenly gone. Although she did remain positive through this whole journey she wasn't the same. The light that once was bright in her eyes grew dim and was replaced with pain. I will never forget exactly where I was and what I was doing when I got the news. My world came to a complete stop. I had never felt pain like that. It felt as though someone had stabbed me in the heart. Everything I knew was gone. I still feel this pain daily. Many people say it will get better, but it won't I will just have to learn to live with it.

Not too long later my maternal grandma moved in. We were told of her serious health conditions and what to do should anything happen. I began to expect the worst could and would happen at any moment. The uncertainty slowly ate away at me. The thought of losing another grandmother terrified me beyond belief.

While we were helping my grandma maintain her health my Aunt made some wrong turns. We ended up with temporary custody of my cousins. Now imagine going from a family of four to a family of seven. Things got extremely hectic and sometimes very crowded. Between trying to get them ready in the morning, picking them up after school, their activities as well as mine I had no time to myself. That was of course except for those token hours I could steal away to the cages or to go play catch with a friend. I saw that all too familiar look of pain in their eyes. At the ages of 12 and 7 they had their whole entire world ripped out from under them and they didn't understand why. We worked everyday to make sure they felt loved and cared for until they could return home.

Being vulnerable isn't something I am good at. However I was lucky enough to be blessed with someone who understands me more than I understand myself sometimes. Someone who listens to me and truly cares. Margo, my younglife leader, became my rock. I don't know

why but I could tell her anything and everything, and I do. I trust her completely. Which is why it hurt so much when she moved. We still keep in close contact but our relationship is definitely not like it used to be. When she left she not only took another little piece of my world but my support system. Carrying all of my burdens around and trying to concentrate on school was next to impossible. Stress and anxiety overtook my life, I shut down completely. Softball was my only escape. It is the only time I am not thinking about all the negatives of the outside world. Softball has been my passion for as long as I can remember. It is what excites me, motivates me, it keeps me going.

On top of all of this we recently got two new foster kids. They are the sweetest little kiddos and I would do anything for them. They make my life crazy but it is worth it to show them what it is like to truly be loved. Driving them to school makes my mornings so very joyful, even though sometimes it makes me late to school it is necessary and a sacrifice I am willing to make.

I was starting to try and find my "normal" again when I was told my great grandma had less than a week to live. Two days later she passed away, she was in kidney failure. I feel like every time I tried to pick the pieces of my life up and put them back together they would crumble into even smaller pieces. I know life isn't supposed to be easy but I am fairly certain it isn't supposed to be this painful, especially not at this age.

Please consider the struggles I have faced while contemplating whether or not to grant me a hardship.

Thank you for your consideration

- Amber Ihde



Christy E. Rivers, D.O.
Pediatrics

To Whom It may Concern,

Amber Ihde (DOB: 2/24/98)
is being treated by Dr. Rivers
for migraines. She has medication
for this, and has been referred to
psychiatry for this also.

Sincerely,

Ashley, RN / Dr. Rivers

Christy E. Rivers, D.O.
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To Whom It May Concern:

It is encouraging and motivating to be surrounded by people who are ambitious and courageous; to be around people who are supportive, tenacious and generous. Amber Ihde is marked by these characteristics. These traits and more have helped her to overcome obstacles life has thrown at her.

I have known Amber for three years and have been her Young life leader, and her mentor. I have watched her grow and mature, and find ways to be the best version of herself. With that, I have also seen her endure through tough family issues, hardships with friends, struggles in school, and adversity in her sports.

Amber doesn't open up easily to others with the hardships she goes through, but she has confided in me, and I have been able to encourage and guide her to broaden her perspective and battle through the trials. Amber's family has shaped a lot of who she is today. She had to be more independent than most kids her age as a young girl. This independence helped her to become a go-getter and problem solver. Although we can't solve all of the problems in the world, Amber works hard to build the peace within her family and other verticals of her life.

Over the past two years, Amber has experienced and is working through more hardship than most teenage girls undergo. Recently she has grieved through death of a close family member, suffered broken relationships, and experienced many foster kids in and out of the house. Amber and I have spent many hours processing how to navigate through these trials that she is surrounded by daily. I have seen her mourn in a healthy way. I have seen her rise up and take initiative to improve her relationship with her father. And I have seen her become an incredible role model and care taker to so many young kids in the community.

Amber still has plenty of hard days, but she will never give up fighting for what she wants. I am proud of who she has become and the ways she has been a leader in her high school to younger classmen. I am blessed and honored to be a part of this incredible young woman's journey.

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