



COLORADO CHILD ENFORCES FEDERAL LAW WHERE ELECTED OFFICIALS WON'T

Parents of a child with a disability struggle for awareness and change in a fight for equal human rights

COLORADO SPRINGS , COLORADO , USA, July 6, 2017 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Having a child is as equally exciting as it is terrifying and my wife and I were both of these when our daughter was born. When we first brought her home, we knew our lives would change; that the sweet little bundle of pink would forever be the new center of our existence. Just weeks after taking our angel home, we sat in a hospital waiting room while a doctor told us that our perfect baby had suffered a stroke – and in consequence would lead a very different life than anyone could have imagined. Life changed when our daughter entered this world and it changed again as the doctor uttered those words. It's been years since that moment, but it's one that will never be forgotten.

There is a bigger purpose to our parenthood and we know the disabilities and multiple diagnoses our daughter has are meant to inspire people, change the world, and bring about awareness on behalf of every family or person living with a disability. We have always been open with our daughter about her condition and towards the people we have contact with. We believe this brings an understanding and strength to her, our family, and all those we encounter. Truly knowing the struggles of someone who encounters life with constant challenges changes your perspective on everything and has allowed our daughter, and we as her parents, to recognize more fully some of what we were born to do.

Since the beginning of this journey as a family, we have not been strangers to creating awareness and change for our daughter and she has been with us every step of the way. When we asked her if she wanted to help make changes for people who have struggles like her, her response was simple yet so powerful. She said, "If we do good things and make good changes, the whole world would change in a good way." Our number one goal as parents is always to support and encourage our daughter in any way we can. We must be her advocate and do everything in our power to give her the best life possible; just like any parent should do for their child. We must fight the battles that she can't to ensure she is safe and able to follow her dreams. We can also fight this battle for all of those with disabilities because many don't have people fighting for their safety and dreams.

Our daughter has cerebral palsy and has great difficulty doing tasks most of us consider inherent to life – most notably, the ability to walk or use her limbs with precision and force. One of the hardest experiences a parent can have is to watch their child cry because they are "different". As our daughter gets older we experience new struggles and "differences", many of which would be eliminated with true compliance with the ADA. Despite federal and state laws banning unequal access to the opening of doors, going to the bathroom, walking up stairs, and walking through businesses without the fear of falling, she still deals with it every day; and it's incredibly painful for our entire family. Luckily, she has a service dog that has been trained to help her with many of these tasks but there is still so much she is limited by and even more so when she is constantly presented with ADA violations. Her service dog, a provider of medically required support, was not intended to assist her in overcoming violations of the American's With Disabilities Act by non-compliant businesses; it was to work in conjunction with the ADA to ensure she has equal access.

Although our daughter's service dog provides amazing assistance, the hardships she encounters, by

ADA violating businesses, is daunting. The moment we pull up to a business, the fierce independence our daughter has is chipped away as she is bombarded with barriers. If parking spaces are not correctly marked, we cannot identify accessible parking and neither can the able-bodied individuals who mistakenly park in them. If there are not compliant access aisles, we are not able to safely unload our daughter and her service animal away from dangerous traffic. If the space is not located in the correct proximity to the business entrance, our daughter is not able to travel the extra distance and requires the use of a stroller or cart. If the door is improperly weighted she is unable to open the door. If the carpet or door mat is not securely fastened, she is at risk of falling; which is a common occurrence for her and is extremely dangerous due to her high susceptibility to head injuries. If the aisles of a business are not wide enough she is not able to walk with her service dog by her side; which puts her at risk of falling and injuring herself. If a toilet isn't the correct height she is not able to leverage the grab bars, if they are even present, to be able to lift herself onto the toilet. If the toilet paper is too far from the toilet, or the soap or paper towel dispenser is too high, she is not able to reach. These "minor" violations that many claim "aren't hurting anyone" or "aren't that big of a deal" wear on our child and beat her down until she doesn't want to go out into public. And if breaking the will of a child who strives to live an independent life isn't enough, each of these violations puts her at an alarmingly high risk of injuries that could reverse the major advances she has made to have control of her own body and independence.

If everyone could take a step back and see the world through the eyes of a child, who just wants the rights guaranteed to her by law but denied by these businesses, they would be challenging the businesses that are breaking the law instead of the child who must fight for her basic rights. Believing that the actions we are taking are malicious or self-serving is misguided – spend a day in her shoes and your eyes will be opened. We are disgusted by the actions of those powerful enough to make change, due to their position in the media, who continually manipulate their viewers into thinking businesses that choose to break a law (that was twenty years old when our daughter was born) are the victims.

Local news reporters have been working to sensationalize our efforts by trying to vilify our fight for our child's civil rights so their ratings improve. Their misguided ambition is continuing the segregation that was recognized as illegal over 27 years ago. They are pretending to be parents of children with disabilities and trying to find some detail to exploit or twist into a sensational story instead of writing about the millions of individuals with disabilities that are harmed by these "minor violations"; this may boost ratings but undermines their credibility. They should be using their influence to make a positive change for the largest protected class in the world and end this segregation. Not once have they asked to experience how these violations affect our daughter; they have simply made assumptions and reported them as fact. They have harassed us at our home, made ultimatums via social media, badgered our friends and family, and lied to their viewers.

Yes, we use attorneys; because civil rights matters require a court's ruling. Yes, there is cost involved; because attorneys don't work for free. Yes, we have participated in filing many cases; because so many businesses are non-compliant. Yes, most businesses settle confidentially out of court; because this method is the most cost-effective solution for us all and allows them to conclude the case without having to publicly disclose their violations, while still agreeing to remediate "fix" the ADA violation. No, giving notice doesn't make a difference; when we do we are often told to "suck it up" or "deal with it", regardless, businesses have had notice for twenty-seven years and haven't changed. No, there is no such thing as a minor violation; because every disability, and ability, is different and, the ADA is literally a matter of inches... either you are compliant or you aren't. No, businesses aren't the victims; because their consequences come about from their own decision not to be compliant. There would be no attorneys, no cost, and no cases if these businesses complied with this twenty-seven-year-old law. We understand some might not like this today but millions will benefit from it in the future. This is a lesson we want our daughter to understand, this struggle today will allow others to avoid hardship in

the future.

The time for change in our community is long past due. As parents, it is our duty to provide a safe environment for our children, regardless of abilities . We encourage business owners, on their own accord, to join in and become compliant. On behalf of our child, we will continue to utilize all resources and methods available until her rights of equal accessibility are a reality... not just a dream.

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