

MASCOTS MATTER AND REP. MAURICE WEST INTRODUCE LANDMARK BILL TO PROTECT DISABILITY COMMUNITIES

Illinois bill bans disability-based mascots, ensuring schools align with ADA protections. Mascots Matter leads the charge for inclusivity.

SPRINGFIELD, IL, UNITED STATES, February 10, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Mascots Matter, a national grassroots advocacy campaign dedicated to ending the use of derogatory and discriminatory mascots, team names, and logos, with an emphasis on Dwarfism, is proud to announce its collaboration with Illinois State Representative Maurice West on groundbreaking legislation. The proposed bill seeks to prohibit public educational institutions from using mascots or imagery that perpetuate harmful stereotypes or discriminate against individuals based on disability.



Logo for Mascots Matter

The bill, titled "Prohibition of Discriminatory Disability Mascots Act" ([HB3527](#)), aims to ensure that all public educational environments foster respect and inclusivity, aligning with the principles of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Key Provisions of the Proposed Legislation:

- **Definition of Discriminatory Mascots:** The bill defines a discriminatory disability mascot as "any name, logo, or imagery derogatory or representative of a disability, aligning with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)."
- **Interpretation of Public Educational Institutions:** Public educational institutions as defined by the bill, includes any kindergarten through grade 12 school, public university, or community college receiving public funding within the State.



There are currently five high schools in the U.S. that use 'Midget' as a mascot, a term that has long been considered offensive by the disability community."

Rachel Wherley, Founder & Co-Director, Mascots Matter

- Timeline for Transition: Existing materials may be used until September 1, 2028, if specific requirements are met. For comprehensive details, please review the full bill text.

- Effective Date: The act will take effect on a date to be determined upon its passage.

An Independent Effort

The Mascots Matter Campaign is a grassroots movement led by adults with dwarfism and parents of children with

dwarfism. It is not affiliated with any program or project connected to any national dwarfism organizations.

Why This Legislation Matters

Discriminatory mascots and imagery perpetuate harmful stereotypes and contribute to a culture of exclusion and disrespect for marginalized communities. Research has shown that such representations can negatively impact self-esteem, reinforce stigma, and hinder efforts toward inclusivity. Addressing these issues aligns with broader civil rights advancements and ensures that schools foster a respectful and welcoming environment for all students, including those with disabilities.

Maurice West, Illinois state representative expressed that "Every student deserves to learn in an environment that is inclusive and respectful. The Prohibition of Discriminatory Disability Mascots Act will ensure that all public schools in Illinois align with our state's values of dignity and equality. No student should feel that they are being represented by a mascot that perpetuates harmful stereotypes. I'm proud to introduce this legislation alongside Mascots Matter and disability advocates who have worked tirelessly to bring this issue to light."

Erin Elswood, co-director of Mascots Matter, emphasized the campaign's growth: "Our movement started with a focus on the dwarfism community, but we quickly realized the broader impact mascots can have on all disability communities. This legislation is a crucial step in making sure all students feel included and valued in their schools."

Shelby Holloway, co-director of Mascots Matter, highlighted the urgency of the bill: "Illinois has the opportunity to lead the nation in ensuring that public schools do not endorse mascots that demean any group of people. The time for debate has passed; the time for legal action is now."

Rachel Wherley, founder of Mascots Matter, pointed to the national scope of the issue: "There are currently five high schools in the U.S. that use 'Midget' as a mascot, a term that has long been considered offensive by the disability community. Our goal is to pass legislation in all of

those states, not just Illinois, to put an end to these harmful representations once and for all."

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