

# Mascots Matter and Senator Molly Donahue Introduce Iowa Bill on School Mascots and Disability Rights

*Mascots Matter and Sen. Donahue introduce Iowa bill to ban school mascots that discriminate against disability communities, ensuring inclusivity in education.*

DES MOINES, IA, UNITED STATES, February 20, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Mascots Matter](#), a national grassroots advocacy organization committed to ending the use of derogatory and discriminatory mascots, has partnered with Iowa State Senator Molly Donahue (D-District 37) to introduce a bill that would prohibit the use of offensive school mascots, team names, and logos across the state of Iowa.



The proposed legislation, [Senate File 382](#), seeks to ensure that all public educational institutions in Iowa provide an inclusive and respectful environment by eliminating mascots and team names that perpetuate harmful stereotypes or discrimination based on disability.

## Key Provisions of the Proposed Legislation:

- **Definition of Discriminatory Mascots:** Prohibits mascots, names, or imagery associated with disabilities, as defined in the federal Americans with Disabilities Act, that could perpetuate harmful stereotypes.
- **Interpretation of Public Educational Institutions:** Applies to school districts, accredited nonpublic schools, charter schools, innovation zone schools, community colleges, and institutions under the control of the state board of regents.
- **Timeline and Transition:** Schools must conduct a mascot review within one year of the bill's passage and transition to an inclusive mascot by September 1, 2027. The bill requires the



Society needs to learn that we are a part of the disability community. We have rights. We're protected under the ADA, and 'midget' is a derogatory slur."

*Shelby Holloway, Co-Director,  
Mascots Matter*

department of education to develop and administer a department of education mascot grant program to provide grants to off set the costs associated with complying with the bill's provisions, including costs related to purchasing new signage, uniforms, and educational materials.

- Effective Date: The law takes effect immediately upon passage, with schools required to cease adopting or purchasing new materials featuring discriminatory mascots.

## 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.

Molly Donahue, Iowa State Senator expressed that "School mascots should embody values of inclusivity and respect, ensuring they represent the entire community in a positive and appropriate manner. A mascot that is inclusive fosters unity, pride, and a sense of belonging among all students, staff, and supporters, while avoiding stereotypes or imagery that might alienate or harm others. This bill ensures that Iowa moves forward in creating a learning environment that respects the dignity of all students and communities."

Rachel Wherley, Founder and Co-Director of Mascots Matter, emphasized the importance of this legislation: "This bill marks a pivotal moment in our fight for inclusivity. For too long, harmful and outdated mascots have gone unchallenged, sending the wrong message to students and communities. Iowa now has an opportunity to lead by example."

Shelby Holloway, Co-Director of Mascots Matter, added, "Representation matters. No child should feel marginalized or ridiculed because of the imagery their school chooses to promote. By passing this bill, Iowa will ensure that all students feel respected and valued."

Erin Elswood, Co-Director of Mascots Matter, reinforced the organization's commitment: "This is the second bill we have collaborated on to address discriminatory mascots, furthering our mission to create respectful and inclusive educational environments. The progress we are making is proof that change is possible when communities come together to demand better."

The bill is expected to be introduced in the upcoming legislative session with strong support from advocacy groups, educators, and community leaders.

#### For Legislative Inquiries

Office of Senator Molly Donahue: [molly.donahue@legis.iowa.gov](mailto:molly.donahue@legis.iowa.gov)  
Phone: (515) 281-3371

#### For Media Inquiries

Jillian Curwin  
Mascots Matter  
[press@mascotsmatter.net](mailto:press@mascotsmatter.net)

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