

Dear Mrs. Haley,

3 June 2014

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to you not to ask for anything but rather to share with you the enormous pride I feel as a mother & the great potential for a bright future that exists in our state. You see, my people have been on this land prior to America and prior to a piece of it being called South Carolina. I love my ancestral homeland deeply, but I am a realist and realists see the cold reality of the situation.

My situation is this - I am a single mother with a special needs child. My now ex-husband decided a decade ago that parenting was hard in the best of circumstances. Our circumstances were less than ideal. That left me with a 2 year old and dedication. My daughter is a fighter. She hung on through pre-term labor, through surgeries, through long trips clear across the state to see specialists (knowing the entire trip that blood work would be in the future. She overcame grade school bullies picking on her for being "different" and being "weird". She suffered through poorly educated teachers harping on her daily for lack of eye contact even though those specialists gave pages of medical reasons why that particular expectation was too much. She has struggled with unimaginable self-doubt, self-hate, and social anxiety. About a year and a half ago she talked of how much better the world would be without her. She was 10 and 11 years old during that dark time.

Well, through legislation that helps pay for private school for special gifts like my daughter, I was able to have my daughter at a private school in Greenville.

As I said, it's just the 2 of us and I work for a small non-profit. No child support or food stamps and honestly if I am to keep the insurance that pays for her medical needs, I cannot afford to earn too much. It's a catch-22 for us on most days. My daughter is worth any sacrifice and she really deserves so very much more than I am able to give her. In lieu of TV or video games or a phone, we spend time together. Yes, some of that time is rather directed in my head so that I make sure she gets through her home programs for her therapies, but the rest is just mother-daughter bonding. I have encouraged my daughter to always try her best. Well, Mrs. Haley, yesterday I sat at my daughter's 6<sup>th</sup> grade graduation as she received award after award - Art, Music, Spanish, highest Standardized test scores, school spirit, student council. Finally there was a moment where a letter was read from President Obama and the Presidential Award for Educational Excellence - Gold Level - was given to my daughter. This year in her private school class of 10 mainstreamed 6<sup>th</sup> graders a dedicated teacher pushed my daughter to reach for the stars - and the results are impressive.

I hope that if you are actually reading this you can feel the unbelievable amount of happiness I do. My daughter, Rebecca Cazarin, ended this school year not in a dark place, not in a casket, but front and center receiving happily all of the acknowledgements of her hard work. I hope also that the fact that the impoverished child can overcome all obstacles leaves a promise for the same for our State and our country. Girls can do anything and mine is proof of that!

Sincerely,  
Heather Cazarin

From: Heather Cazarin  
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Concerning her daughter, Rebecca Cazarin.