

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

KAY IVEY
GOVERNOR



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STATE OF ALABAMA

February 22, 2022

Ms. Judy Chiles-Dent
Principal
Oakwood Adventist Academy
7000 Adventist Blvd NW
Huntsville, AL 35896

Dear Ms. Chiles-Dent:

I am writing to express solidarity with your boys' basketball team for its alleged treatment at the AHSAA Class 1A Boys' Northeast Regional Basketball Semi-Finals this past weekend. The idea that a team like Oakwood could be denied a chance to compete based on its faith—without even the most modest of accommodations—is deeply concerning.

One bright spot in the coverage of these events was the sentiment of team captain Raynon Andrews, who said he hopes that this unfortunate experience will lead to change so that something like this won't ever happen again. I wholeheartedly agree.

To that end, I would like to invite you and the players and coaches of your boys' basketball team to the Capitol to meet with me at your earliest convenience. Most importantly, we need to celebrate the team's hard-earned achievements this season, which culminated in securing a playoff spot. But I also want to hear about the team's experience at the AHSAA tournament. In that way, I will be able to work with others in state government and the athletics community to ensure a situation like this never happens again.

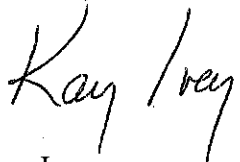
Please convey to your team members and their coaches how proud I am of them for sticking to their beliefs. Their selfless display of sportsmanship in attending the playoff games at Jacksonville State University, despite their forced forfeit, to cheer on those teams who so graciously agreed to accommodate your team's Sabbath observance, is an inspiring example to competitors and athletes everywhere. These young men, both on your team and on the other affected teams, are worthy ambassadors for their schools and their communities.

On a personal note, I know that my faith has brought me both comfort and strength throughout my life. I am encouraged that the young men on your basketball team understand the importance of prioritizing their faith over the things of this world. That they have been instilled with this maturity at such early ages will serve them well beyond their playing days.

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I know this is a disappointing way to end a season after what must have been a great deal of hard work and sacrifice by your team to make it to the playoffs. I hope, together, we can make some good come out of it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kay Ivey". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kay Ivey
Governor