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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Bridge II Sports to Showcase Wheelchair Basketball at NC State Capitol  
April 4, 2019; 10 AM-2 PM**

**DURHAM, N.C. — March 29, 2019 —**BIIS will be hosting a wheelchair basketball demonstration in support of their program EveryBODYPlaysNC, the innovative school-based disability awareness program supported by the State Legislature.

As NC Legislators make their way between committee meetings and sessions on Thursday April 4<sup>th</sup> they'll encounter a lot of activity and a unique opportunity on the Halifax Mall.

From 10am to 2pm Bridge II Sports is converting the mall into a basketball court and showcasing wheelchair basketball as part of their EveryBODYPlaysNC disability awareness in schools initiative.

Legislators, staff and the public are encouraged to join Bridge II Sports' athletes with physical disabilities, get in a sport wheelchair, take a few shots and learn more about the powerful impact adapted sports has had in their lives.

Bridge II Sports is a NC non-profit dedicated to using sport as a catalyst to create empowering opportunities for people with physical disabilities and challenge perceptions of disability in the community. Bridge II Sports proudly provides year-round adapted sports programs for youth, Veterans and adults with physical disabilities in the Triangle and beyond and is also the home of Valor Games Southeast and August Madness.

In an effort to effect change for generations to come, Bridge II Sports has developed the EveryBODYPlaysNC initiative. This program brings a full-day adapted sports experience into NC public schools allowing all students, both with and without disability, to play together, break down barriers and stereotypes and leave with a greater understanding of disability. Bridge II Sports staff- many of whom have physical disabilities themselves- introduce students to wheelchair basketball, boccia, goalball and sitting volleyball as well as disability etiquette.

"As an expert in providing adapted sports to persons with physical disability, Bridge II Sports is a great organization. Their innovative program, EveryBODYPlaysNC is just what we need to help youth with disabilities and their able-bodied peers to understand that EveryBODY can be an athlete." stated NC Representative Donna White "This Program has also proven to help bring more inclusion to a world that needs more kindness."

On January 25, 2013, the **Office for Civil Rights (OCR) of the U.S. Department of Education** issued a Dear Colleague Letter clarifying elementary, secondary, and postsecondary level schools' responsibilities under the Rehab Act (1973).<sup>1</sup> At this time, Ashley Thomas, the Founder and CEO of Bridge II Sports met with Dr. Atkinson, NC School Superintendent, Board Chairperson Cobey and Dr. William Hussey to discuss opportunities.

"As a person with a disability and growing up as a child with a disability I know the difficult journey of navigating a world with few opportunities where people don't understand your perspective." Ms. Thomas commented "With the EveryBODYPlaysNC program it is my goal to open up the hearts and minds of all children in North Carolina breaking down discrimination and creating a state where everybody has the opportunity to play."

In 2015, through efforts spearheaded by Ms. Thomas, working collaboratively with Reps. Stam and Lambeth, HB 315 was introduced. The North Carolina State Senate passed SB 524 (2015) AN ACT TO AUTHORIZE THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION TO USE FUNDS TO CONDUCT A PILOT PROGRAM ON INTEGRATED COMMUNITY-BASED ADAPTED SPORTS PROGRAMS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES .

BIIS implemented a pilot from November 2016-June 2018 in 16 schools and is now working on full funding to implement EveryBODYPlaysNC throughout North Carolina.

"For many of us, it's easy to forget how much of our society is made for people who can freely walk, run, and move about in general. But for others, it is their daily existence, and it is crucial that we all work to make the world more accessible to people with physical disabilities." stated NC Senator Don Davis "Bridge II Sports creates opportunities for people with physical disabilities to participate in sports like wheelchair basketball and goalball. Organizations like this one do the much-needed work of recognizing the potential inherent in every individual, regardless of ability, and for that I am grateful."

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<sup>1</sup> Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act (Rehab Act) was the first disability civil rights law to be enacted in the United States prohibiting discrimination against people with disabilities in programs that receive federal financial assistance, and set the stage for enactment of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA-1990).

NC Policies Governing Services for Children with Disabilities were adopted in June 2010. NC 1500-2.1 deals with Adapted physical education indicating that (a) Children with disabilities shall have equal access to the provision of physical education; and (b) If a child with a disability cannot participate in the regular physical education program, individualized instruction in physical education designed to meet the unique needs of the child shall be provided.

#### **About Bridge II Sport**

Bridge II Sports is a North Carolina non-profit organization and Gold Medal Paralympic Sport Club dedicated to developing and implementing opportunities for youth and adults with physical disabilities to realize their potential through sports participation. Through sports programming, special events, awareness initiatives and team development, Bridge II Sports aims to empower persons with physical disabilities to "Find the Player Within" and challenge perceptions of disability. For more information on Bridge II Sports visit [www.bridge2sports.org](http://www.bridge2sports.org)

Challenging Perceptions of Disability ONE GAME AT A TIME

BRIDGE II SPORTS