Members of the committee:

My name is Colin Vieweg.

I am almost 13 and am a 7th grader in Fargo, North Dakota. I have a type of Autism called Asperger's Syndrome.

One in 88 children has an Autism Spectrum Disorder.

I am one in 54 because I am a boy.

Elementary school was terrible because it was nearly impossible for people to understand me. I felt like people were picking on me on purpose. Sometimes I got angry and didn't know how to handle it. I just wanted peace and quiet.

Middle school is okay, but there are pros and cons to middle school.

One of the pros is, you're unique from a lot of other people. There are cons too—like it being hard to make friends. I want to make friends but it's really hard because people just don't understand me as I wish they did. Some people are jerks and don't care about my feelings, but there are also good people who really care about my feelings. Sometimes I just wish I had only the pros of Aspergers but I'm still glad I have Aspergers. I can't explain why because it's really hard.

What's good about Aspergers is: one of the pros is being unique and my memory is quite good. My favorite book genre is science. I love science and Albert Einstein is my hero. He was the world's smartest man in my opinion.

Sometimes it is very hard for me to focus on one thing, especially if there are other distractions. In fact, while mom is typing this for me, I am playing my Nintendo DS. This is the best way to do it. I don't know why, it is just easier. Strangely, it is really hard for me to focus when I'm just doing one thing.

If I'm doing something with my hands, it helps me stay focused on what I'm doing.

My brain needs to be busy in order to help me focus on what I need to do.

It's almost like someone is poking me and won't stop, so my brain is distracted from everything else that I'm doing – distracted enough to make me pause for a while and think.

But sometimes the noise outside my brain makes it hard to pay attention. Also, it can make me really upset. When I'm at the mall it's like I'm in a jungle surrounded by howler monkeys and they're all screaming at the same time. I just need to go away and stay

away from the noise. Mom says that's because my brain processes noises differently than other people.

I wish people knew this about me and Aspergers: that we're different than everyone else. We're different, but, at the same time we're the same. All of us have things that make us unique. Some people are different on the outside; others are different on the inside. My mom says that 'normal' is just a setting on a washing machine. My teacher said that maybe the kids with Aspergers are the 'normal' ones.

I think that maybe both of them are right.

Thank you.