Three-year-old Micaiah Ardianto, who has type 1 diabetes, attended a local Head Start program in Yamhill County, Oregon. The school had a medical care policy that they felt did not allow them to care for his diabetes. This meant that Micaiah could not attend school without a parent there to do so.

Micaiah’s mother, Breeayn, works in the special education field, so she understood the laws that protected children in similar situations. She knew something didn’t seem fair.

Micaiah’s parents tried to work with the school to change that policy. For almost three, frustrating months they shared information with the school about Micaiah’s legal rights. Diabetes is considered a disability under federal law, and the school administration did not understand what that meant. Under the law, the school needed to care for Micaiah’s diabetes and could not require a parent to be there. But, the school administrators would still not budge.

After speaking with one of the Association’s Legal Advocates, as well as staff from its Portland, Oregon office, she became better informed and then contacted the Head Start regional office in Seattle. Staff in the Seattle Head Start office apologized for what happened at Micaiah’s school. They knew that the law was on his side. So, the regional office worked with the local school, and within a short period of time the policy was changed.

The school was ready to care for Micaiah and he was able to return.

Breeayn thinks this was meant to happen to her family. In advocating for her son’s rights, the medical care policy was changed for ALL Head Start Schools in Yamhill County, Oregon. Students with medical needs will now have the opportunity to attend school and be kept safe and healthy.

“Everyone at the American Diabetes Association was amazing. From your nurse who was our first point of contact, to your legal team-everyone I spoke with gave me the confidence to fight for what was right. It was a hard battle, but I hope our story will help others who struggle with similar issues in the future.” Breeayn Ardianto

Breeayn feels so strongly about wanting to help other families that she may even start a support group for parents of children with diabetes (or special needs) in her local area.