

Dear Members of the House Education Committee, re: HB 2748:

I wanted to share a few examples to explain why Riverdale parents, ex-parents, students and community members are so passionate about Riverdale. I'd also love to invite you to join me, with any of your colleagues, to see what really happens inside the doors of Riverdale High School, where most tuition dollars come. Here are some examples:

**We're kind of nerdy, but resourceful.** This past weekend, our Mock Trial team took second at state. There is no budget for Mock Trial. We have volunteer parent and alumni coaches, supervised by a minimally-compensated teacher/head coach and our varsity team practices nights and weekends. We also consistently win the Oregon State University statewide Bridge Building competition, because it is a required assignment in our sophomore physics class, and some kids keep doing it. For YEARS, bridge building winning banners were the only ones in our school. They still dominate, though we have a fair number for "Sportsmanship." **THIS is Riverdale.**

**We accept students who want to be here.** There is an admissions process. It's a small high school. It became apparent years ago that if a student didn't want to be at Riverdale, it wasn't going to be a good fit. Riverdale is a community of nice, diverse, interesting kids. Think Reed, not USC. They're pretty much not in a position to disappear into the masses. And academically, they're taught to think. This is not to say that Riverdale only accepts smart, easy kids. In the halls this past week, I heard not less than four staff members discussing an out-of-District senior and celebrating that student's passing of state benchmark tests, which has been a struggle. (Confidentiality prevents me being more specific) This kid could make it in the right college with the right services. He/she has a "village" to help him/her get there. Though Riverdale doesn't have the capability to provide special needs services to a huge number of students (again, budget constraints), it neither discriminates against nor lacks foresight in its admission process. **THIS is Riverdale.**

**We're not so great at athletics, but everyone gets to participate.** This year, for the first time, the Riverdale boy's 2A basketball team made it to the second round of state playoffs. One of the reasons? An out of District student entered Riverdale high school as a freshman. Already he was probably about 6'3. I can't imagine how many times he was asked "Do you play basketball?" as he grew to his 6'8 of today. He didn't. His Junior year, for reasons that remain a mystery to me, but maybe was due to the constant pleas from basketball coaches combined with Riverdale's no-cut athletic policy, he played JV basketball. This year, he was promoted to varsity, and I hear mastered the art of the rebound. **THIS is Riverdale.**

**Riverdale serves the greater community.** Riverdale High School REQUIRES 90 hours of community service per student. In at least the past five years, graduating seniors have, en masse, tripled and quadrupled, that number. Recently, Riverdale students have operated a non-profit, Donors Resource, that matches potential donors in the Portland Metro area to places/people who need their donations. ([www.Donorsresource.org](http://www.Donorsresource.org)) Additionally, since 2005, selected Riverdale students have gone on a three-week service trip to southern India to help build infrastructure, childrens' libraries and other amenities. Money is raised by students for this life-changing trip a year in advance. A Riverdale teacher, Laurie Lepore, also is a long-term advocate for clean

water resources, and teaches a class “H2O For Life.” Students in her class routinely raise funds through hosting dances and selling doughnuts (and more) to improve water quality in poor nations. **THIS is Riverdale.**

**Riverdale has art, music & PE, but barely.** Riverdale High School has an art teacher, fortunately because one four-year academic requirement is in the Arts. The Music teacher is half time, and our PE teacher is also our Athletic Director. Budget cuts have, at times, cut our Athletic Director, so he serves both schools in our District. PE, Music and Art have been reduced at Riverdale Grade School. Our Librarians have both been cut to reduced hours. We are clinging to these “extras” as long as we can hold out, with big PERS payouts and flat per-student funding from the State on the horizon. **THIS is Riverdale.**

**We are the ultimate “Open Enrollment” District.** If you are looking at serving economic and geographic diversity, Riverdale doesn’t discriminate. Students have come to Riverdale from Hillsboro, Salem, SE Portland, NE Portland, Beaverton, West Linn...and more. Parents drive, kids take Tri-met or bike to school. More than 50 of these students have received some level of financial aid through our need-blind admissions process. We’re hoping for even more financial aid funds, so we can help more students access our small-school atmosphere. But we do have a cap, mandated by our neighbors, of 300 students. Thus, any perception of “poaching” from neighboring districts, just can’t happen. **THIS is Riverdale.**

**We are a PUBLIC school doing our best to deliver a personalized education.** Riverdale High School has **12** teachers for approximately 250 students. By comparison, if you want to look at a similar-sized private school, Oregon Episcopal School’s Upper (High) School has approximately 310 students and **52** teachers. **THIS is Riverdale.**

**You can leave Riverdale but you can’t stay away.** My youngest son graduated from RHS last year. Still, I volunteer weekly (ranging from 10 to 40 hours/week ) as a college adviser working with the only guidance/academic/college counselor for 250 students. Naturally, funding cuts eliminated any kind of paid college counseling available years ago. **THIS is Riverdale**

**Please vote “no” on House Bill 2748.,**

Respectfully,

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