

March 25, 2013

Dear Chair Gelser and Members of the Committee,

I am concerned about HB 2748 which proposes to prohibit districts from charging tuition for non-resident students. I raise this concern for both personal and professional reasons.

Our Family Story:

Both my children attended Portland Public Schools. I was active with our schools through the PTA as well as volunteering daily in the classrooms. When my son graduated 8th grade he moved on to a Portland Public High School. After his first semester of 9th grade, I removed him from the school. During that semester he was bullied and teased by the other students. My son became depressed and refused to attend school. As a parent I was deeply concerned about this dramatic change in my child's behavior. Regularly I spoke to his counselor. The counselor's advice to me was to get him on medication to treat depression. I was shocked by this response, as a high school counselor is neither a medical doctor nor a psychologist qualified to diagnose and treat depression. When I consulted our doctor I was told that my child was not clinically depressed, medication would be an ineffective and inappropriate treatment. The issue was the bullying. Given the reluctance of the school to address the bullying my husband and I choose to find another school for my son. Fortunately, a neighboring district, Riverdale, offered an option for non-residents to attend their school. We enrolled my son in February 2011 in their school.

My son is now a junior. He has earned a 3.9 grade point average. He is a student leader and mentor to younger students. He is well liked and appreciated by his teachers and peers. He is also representing his school in the state-wide music competition this May. He is looking forward to applying to college next year as a confident, competent and happy young man.

We had the opportunity to find an appropriate school placement for our son. Our story is not unique. Bullying is an epidemic in our schools. Families and students need options to make sure that their children have the opportunity to attend schools that are safe and appropriate for their learning needs.

As an educator I have had the opportunity to spend time in public middle and high schools throughout the Portland Metro Area. For five years I supervised and taught student teachers at Lewis and Clark College and at Portland State University. We have some excellent public schools. We have dedicated administrators and teachers. There is no doubt that a majority of our students can receive a fine education in our public system. But no system is perfect. No system can meet every need for every child. There are a number of children who need a different setting, a different teaching style, or even a fresh start. Offering tuition is one way to keep options open for our children. As an

educator I apply a standard of do no harm. If a policy does no harm to other yet offers opportunity to those in need then I have to support it.

If HB 2748 passes we do harm children. We close a door to parents and children who need alternatives in finding appropriate educational settings for their children.

I support public education. I enrolled my children in public school. I am committed to making sure our public schools provide the best education possible. My tax dollars continue to support my local public school and my tuition dollars support a neighboring public school district.

I urge you to vote against HB 2748.

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah Barany, PhD
Dr. Deborah Barany