

Chairman, Vice-Chair Representatives, and Members of the House Committee of Education:

Regarding the bill proposal HB2748, I highly suggest that before passing any bill, this bill is not just about the money out-of-district parents are spending.

To regard this bill in full light, one must also see that it may possibly lead to closing a school, that in its own right is an excellent academic institution, surrounded by intelligent and insightful teachers; along with a staff that is second to none, and a community which supports Riverdale High School, and generously gives to RHS Foundation to keep it afloat.

We, just as other schools are struggling to keep all programs available to our students. It is one of the few public high schools that has maintained a small teacher to student ratio. The high school is a small building, so it can only accommodate a certain number of students.

We, my husband and I, after going to another larger elementary school program, and then transferring to another smaller middle school, found that our daughter was most successful and needed a smaller classroom setting. So to do so, we were willing to pay for this, or move into the district. We ended up choosing the latter. A parent when faced with this kind of learning need can find oneself in a quagmire, because there are so few schools today that have a small classroom setting. At Riverdale HS, they have carpets on most classroom floors, creating a more quiet atmosphere, where a student who is distracted by these kinds of noises, can focus better, and can also hear better what the teacher is saying. This is priceless for a parent who has had to communicate this to each every teacher since elementary school. At Riverdale, due to the smaller classroom sizes, and very respectful students, and caring setting, a student can truly thrive - where in other settings, this child will need special accommodations.

Realize that all Riverdale district parents do not send their kids to Riverdale high school. Many choose Jesuit, which is a private 6A high school, (often if their kid would like to excel not only in school but also in sports). At Riverdale, the few sports programs offered are often a 2A level, and in some sports it may be higher depending on the other schools that RHS competes against. Also many Riverdale district parents choose to send their kid to either Lake Oswego, or Lakeridge - for often the same reasons, or even to get some college credits out of the way. So Riverdale High School is not always frequented by all the kids who live in the district. So it's a complex type of a situation.

I believe that the school is meant to survive, and it has survived because it fills a need. Many parents who send their kids to the Jewish middle schools, or the International middle school, do not have a high school that they feed into.... so if they would like their child to continue to be educated in a smaller classroom setting, there are not that many choices, even when looking to private schools. St. Mary's is 6A, Central Catholic is 6A, Jesuit is 6A - and there are a few other smaller private schools such as Caitlin Gabel, or OES one could choose from.

Riverdale, I believe should remain as it is, because I feel that without having the out-of-district students (the ones who do pay a tuition to go there) there would be a lack of diversity. My daughter is friends with girls who come from the Jewish middle school, and I think it's important to have diversity in a school setting where people have some socio-economic, and cultural diversity. This how we can understand each other, and be more accepting of someone from a different background, other than our own. Our foreign exchange students are also wonderful, and force kids to open their minds from their own habits, and thought patterns. RHS also needs the extra funds to keep operating as a small school. The school can only house so many students.

I truly sense that this bill, is like a death threat to the survival of a wonderful program here at Riverdale. It's a community unlike any other I, or my daughter has been a part of. At her former elementary school, Chapman Elementary, I would say 'hi' to the kids and they wouldn't say 'hi' back. I always sensed this as a form of disrespect. It was like that for 5 years. She tried the feeder middle school, East Sylvan, and it was alright, but a lot bullying and obnoxious behavior existed at the school; everyone who attends is affected by it. She stayed that year, because the teachers were really good. She went next to West Sylvan, and there the behavior of the middle schoolers only got worse. They still were unable to say 'hi' when addressed by me or any other adult. (And I joked with some parents I still stay in touch with, and nothing has changed even into high school at Lincoln - which is supposed to be one of the best public schools in the state I might add -- not socially though - from my perspective)

We transferred then to another, smaller middle school, Robert Gray. It was wonderful experience for my daughter. The kids said 'hi' and were more just normal kids. She finished her 8th grade year there, and we hesitated placing her in a larger classroom environment (because of our earlier experiences) and her feeder school would have been Wilson HS. Also, we wanted the best kind of education for her, and a challenging one, and we thought that she was ready to handle this. Yet, testing in some subjects was not yet her forte, so again going to a smaller classroom setting made sense. And I had already explored and loved what I saw at Riverdale HS. She had done a shadow day there and she said that all of the kids were nice and respectful.

The teachers at RHS are wonderful! My daughter hasn't had a bad experience yet, even with very challenging classes her freshman and sophomore year, such as Physics, Genetics, Chemistry, Spanish to name a few.... RHS is considered a college prep school, so the types of coursework offered is very interesting, stimulating, and challenging. My daughter is now better prepared for the coursework she will eventually find at college. I felt that Wilson HS was not the type of school to prepare her, given her needs, for college. And both my husband and I felt that we made the right choice. We happened to be able to move into district, so this worked out perfectly for us. However, if I lived out of district, I would be willing to pay for the type of education that you get at Riverdale. And it's a great thing that this type of opportunity exists. Many parents seek this, and are unable to find it. We were lucky. And it's not a question of being fair, it's more about being able to find a situation that is a good fit. I find that if this bill passes, it wouldn't be fair for the parents who live out of district, or who are willing to

move into district for the type of education that a student can get a Riverdale. It's a very special school, the kids are respectful. They say 'hi' if you address them. Sometimes, often, they will be the first to say 'hi'. For me, this says volumes. Volumes about respect, volumes about awareness, volumes about education.

Also I might add, during her freshman year, there were multiple times where there was a Christmas cookie trade, or an end of the year birthday swimpool party, a dance party where all of the students of the grade were invited, always invited by a Riverdale family living in the district. I find this rare in any high school. I thought it was a very kind gesture of the parents and student, and I was touched by this. It's another example of how this community is a very special one. They reach out in a way to new students. Also the parents have fundraisers, always for the school, where the parents socialize with each other, all for raising money for the school. Many families that live in the RHS community, some who have had children, and some who have kids now attending either the grade school or the high school, give generously whether it be a tech center, or for the foundation to keep a program alive, or a teacher employed. They really support the school 100% and then some, financially, and in any way that they can. I know a parent who donates her time helping to answer phones at the front desk, or odd jobs, not asking for a penny in return.

I really think before casting your vote, to be fair, one must consider all options. Riverdale provides one more choice of a smaller school setting with outstanding academia for transfer students (those who find it are often very thankful to find such a gem - the kids here compete for good grades; they think about college after high school; many kids at Wilson or Robert Gray didn't care about their grades so much...(from my daughter's perspective). It's a great preparatory high school for college. Diversity is extremely important. If the transfer students did not transfer in, there would be a lack of socio-economic diversity. (today's populations are all about diversity and acceptance) Riverdale's livelihood may be eventually shut down because of this bill. A small school may not be able to fund itself. At Riverdale, there is not enough space to allow for enough students like that of a 5A or 6A school, so we have to be realistic and reasonable in considering what we are voting for, and how we are going to affect the schools that already exist. How many schools in Oregon, that are public, accept tuition students? And how many will close down if this bill is passed? Why was this bill created, and for whom will it serve? Where will the kids go if they are seeking a smaller classroom size?

Please consider if this bill will be more damaging, or more beneficial for all involved; kid's minds and lives are at stake here.

Thank you for reading my e-mail.

Best regards,

Tara Christie