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From: Catherine Bekooy <cbekooy@yahoo.com>

Date: 03/31/2013 10:15 PM (GMT-08:00)

To: Berkobien Rick <BerkobR@leg.state.or.us>

Subject: HB 2748

March 31, 2013

Chairwoman Gelser, Vice-Chairs Reardon and Sprenger, and members of the House Education Committee:

I am writing to you to express my extreme opposition to HB 2748, a bill prohibiting public schools from charging tuition to out-of-district families. Our home school is Bridlemile Elementary in the Portland Public School District, but we have chosen to pay tuition to send two of our boys to Riverdale Grade School. Both boys are on the autism spectrum, and we did not believe the options available within Portland Public adequately addressed their learning and social challenges. Over the last four years, as we have watched the funding cuts and negative changes that have plagued the programs PPS recommended, we feel ever more grateful that Riverdale was a choice.

At Riverdale, we have found the stable, small, and supportive environment that is particularly critical for special needs children. Riverdale has provided consistent, caring support in a mainstream environment, which is exactly what our children need to reach their full potential. Special needs children in Portland have extremely limited educational options, so to find Riverdale and have that community not only welcome our children, but work so hard to optimize their skills, was incredible.

We are fortunate to be able to afford the tuition Riverdale sets, and given the difference in our property taxes and the fact that we do not contribute to Riverdale's local option levy, we do not feel it is unfair to pay that tuition. In fact, we are thankful for the choice. As special needs children, our boys represent some of the most vulnerable students in the state, and HB 2748 will hurt them. It does nothing to fix Oregon's inadequate school funding while simultaneously penalizing families and communities that have worked hard to support their local public schools.

HB 2748 has not been adequately publicized or debated. The communities impacted were not notified until very late in the process and even then were given extremely limited time to comment. The bill takes away an important choice for students and parents without addressing any of the state education problems that makes that choice so vital. Taking it away without providing adequate public school options will continue to drive families toward private schools, and for special needs families like ourselves for whom private school is not an option, out of the state entirely.

I urge you to vote "NO" on HB 2748.

Sincerely,

Catherine Bekooy

Mother to Prashant and Avinash Khare