

Subject: Strongly oppose House Bill 2747

Hello, Ms. Rosenbaum--

My name is Sue Jonson, and I am the Learning Specialist (special education teacher) at Riverdale Grade School. I also have an 8th grade son who attends Riverdale as a tuition student, since we live in SE Portland.

I have recently learned about House Bill 2747, and I can't tell you how strongly I oppose this bill. At the moment, Riverdale has a gigantic special education population--17% of our grade school is on an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), which is the highest in the metro area. Large numbers of families with special-needs children have been moving into our district in the past several years because they want the small classes and stellar education offered at Riverdale.

We are a tiny district, and have no self-contained special education classes, special Autism rooms, behavior classes, etc. If this bill were to pass, our special education program would soon be overflowing. We would have no way to know in advance what types of disabilities enrolling students have, and would therefore be unable to plan for the education of any extremely needy students who may enroll. Staffing levels and classroom sizes would be constantly in flux and would need to be changed/added to on an ongoing basis, based on the needs of enrolling students.

For example, take this scenario:

A student enrolls at Riverdale, and because of HB 2747, we are unable to know anything about his special education needs in advance. Let's say that this student has a one-on-one assistant, has spent his whole school career in a special behavior support classroom, and needs Braille services. By law, since each district is legally required to adhere to the services on the IEP, Riverdale would have to suddenly hire and train new staff, create a new classroom structure, and contract out for Braille services. This one student could cost the district \$100,000 per year-- a few students such as this could break us completely. In a large district with extensive infrastructure where all of these services already exist, this may not be a problem, but it certainly would be at Riverdale. There is no doubt in my mind that if this bill were to pass, the largest influx of students we would get would be high-needs special education students seeking to send their kids to Riverdale.

In addition, this bill has come about very suddenly, and has not been widely publicized in districts around the metro area. I would love to see it slow down and be given some serious thought about the implications, which are huge.

Ms. Rosenbaum, I urge you to say NO to House Bill 2747. It's a terrible idea, and would be disastrous to the Riverdale School District.

Thank you,
Sue Jonson
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