

Chair Barnhart, Vice-Chairs Bailey and Berger and member Committee:

My name is Janeen Sollman and I am a parent of two boys, one in college and one in high school in the Hillsboro School District. I have been re-elected to the Hillsboro School Board and I am serving my 5th year in this position. I have served as the board chair in the past, for two of those years. I am here today to provide personal testimony today and I am not here representing the Hillsboro School Board.

I feel very fortunate to live in Hillsboro. An area whose city's mission statement includes "fostering collaborative partnerships that enhance Hillsboro's hometown livability." We do have strong working relationships with our city leadership, chamber of commerce, county agencies and our local businesses. Their support of our schools makes a difference in the lives of our students. We are a school district that is focused on providing 20,000+ students a strong academic foundation and making sure they have ample career and college pathway opportunities provided to them throughout their school years and beyond.

I am here to say we need more help in providing that service to our students. We still have cut days in our district, our classes are bulging at the seams. 31 is the number of students in Mrs. White's third grade classroom in the Hillsboro School District. 31 students with varying educational needs. Six students have intensified learning needs and five students are English language learners. 3rd grade is a benchmark year. We are held accountable through various means such as test scores, attendance of our students, maintaining highly effective teachers and our graduation rates. Our ability to provide individualized education to our students becomes more and more difficult with growing class sizes and limited funds. We have curriculum adoptions that are put on hold. We simply do not have the money to invest in the technology students need today for the careers of tomorrow.

My hope is that the bill that is being brought forward to you is the catalyst in highlighting the need for a larger conversation around education funding and the urgency to provide districts across this state with stable funding and dollars that match the quality education model for our students. Our state depends on people working and in times of a recession, the funds needed for education, and so much more, are cut more due to a shrinking budget. This spells out a need for reform. A need for a discussion on how we support the schools that already exist and how do we pay for those that need to be built.

I share in the frustration with countless others that schools do not have a say, as other taxing districts do, on decisions around growth and what happens to their money. Cemeteries are an example of one of those taxing districts that has a say. Cemeteries are considered an essential service, but schools are not. Are we saying we value the resting place of those that have passed away more than we do the children and their present day education? Schools need to have a voice at the table. When tax abatement requests, vertical housing credits and all the growth happens around us, such as it is in Hillsboro, schools need to be considered an essential service. Schools are an important piece of our community puzzle.

I believe in public education. I believe education is an essential part of a strong foundation for a vibrant community. We have an urgency and a need to act now and every day that we put that urgency on the shelf, we are not serving every student with the world class education they deserve and need to compete for tomorrow's careers.

Thank you for your time and opportunity to share my thoughts with you today and I urge you to please make time for a larger conversation on this matter.

Sincerely,
Janeen Sollman