LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE
CALL FOR VIEWS ON THE NON-DOMESTIC RATES (SCOTLAND) BILL

SUBMISSION FROM ANONYMOUS

Dear Sir/Madam

Barclay Review – Non-Domestic rates Scotland Bill

I write to you today as a parent of a child who attends an Independent School in Scotland and the impact on her life this Bill will have if it is passed.

My daughter is 13 years old and deaf. She spent seven years at a state funded primary school and struggled with everyday life. She was challenged by overcrowded classrooms, lack of support in reaching academic goals, establishing relationships with her peers, catching up on missed work due to multiple hospital admissions, struggles with moving around school without her specialised equipment and so much more. The list really is endless.

We visited the State-Funded Secondary school that was in our catchment area and left feeling let down by our local community. She would be going to a school with 300 other pupils in her year, split between ten classes, and there would be no ability for her to have her allocated hearing equipment as she would have to move between classes and the equipment could not move with her. She was using a Soundfield system, and the secondary school was so old that the system could not be installed throughout it. Having dealt with this at Primary School, I knew that this was ultimately setting my daughter up to fail. She would be left to rot in a classroom and would not have the same equal opportunity to learn that other children have.

We decided to visit Kilgraston School in Bridge of Earn, Perthshire, and she instantly fell in love. The grounds are spectacular and every “sporty” child’s dream. I fell in love with the accessibility to teaching staff and the individual care and attention they promised to shaping and moulding my daughter’s education. Her year group consisted of only 20 children, split into 3 classes and the promise of an individualised educational support plan to aid my daughter’s level of hearing loss.

The decision to remove her from a state-funded school was not an easy one. I am a single parent who works full-time in the NHS, working 12-hour shift patterns and I rely heavily on my parents for childcare support. The financial cost was a huge obstacle for us also. Taking into consideration that I do not receive financial aid from her father and I am a homeowner, we had to apply to her school for a bursary to assist with the fees. Even though we were successful in receiving a very generous bursary from her school, the monthly cost of her fees still remained three times the cost of my mortgage.
Considering this, we have sacrificed tremendously as a family and made it work and she has blossomed into a beautiful child who loves every aspect of her school life. She settled in very quickly and established a lovely group of peers and she has worked hard to catch-up on missed work from primary school, with Kilgraston putting on extra study sessions for her, tailoring her educational needs.

My daughter is coming to the end of her second year at Kilgraston School and both she and I are incredibly saddened to hear about the impending plan to remove eligibility to claim charitable relief from non-domestic rates from mainstream independent schools.

By removing the current charitable relief afforded to independent schools the schools will be forced to raise the deficit in funds by increasing school fees, selling school assets and removing vitally important bursaries and scholarships currently in place for children. This will have a resounding and catastrophic impact on my daughters’ life, her school life, her academic achievements and undoubtedly her future.

If these were to happen, she will no longer be able to continue in her education at Kilgraston and would need to transfer to a State-Funded Secondary School, taking her away from her peers. If she was forced to attend a State-Funded Secondary School due to the repercussions of this Bill she would require access to private transport from the Local Authority. She would also need to attend a Secondary School out with our catchment area so that she has access to the hearing equipment that she desperately requires – this school is currently being built and is due to be newly opened in August of this year.

Furthermore the psychological impact of such a move would have a lasting and irreversible affect on my daughter and her education. she will have no friends at this school and will face huge problems integrating back into another large school, with huge class numbers and a systemic problem of peer bullying. Avoiding this is critically important as she was bullied in primary school and still suffers with the trauma of this. Moreover she will not have the quiet space she currently has and to a great extent requires.

My daughter is currently embarking upon her National 5’s and she is terrified that, if this Bill is passed and she can no longer attend Kilgraston, she may not be able to undertake the qualifications she has chosen. Being unable to sit these courses would unquestionably have a permanent and negative impact upon her career prospects and her future.

Please ensure that this Bill is not passed, as she and hundreds of other children will ultimately suffer as a result.