LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

CALL FOR VIEWS ON THE NON-DOMESTIC RATES (SCOTLAND) BILL

SUBMISSION FROM ANONYMOUS

I am writing to you as a parent of two boys who attend Cargilfield Preparatory School in Edinburgh.

I have read in detail the supporting documents and the actions taken by various committees over the last decade or so and I am thoroughly dishearten to find you have chosen to continue down the route of removing the rate relief for Independent Schools in Scotland despite the recommendation from the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator, which has carried out a thorough review of Independent Schools. The OSCR specifically notes “On disbenefit, we noted that there were arguments current in society that:

- the existence of an independent school has a negative impact on state schools in the same area;
- that independent schools have a divisive influence in society.

We could not find any strong evidence to support these views in the context of the charity test, which requires us to look at any disbenefit resulting from the activities of the charity itself.” I suggest that you take the advice of your regulating body and desist from amending the non-domestic rates (Scotland) Bill.

With regards to the school where our children are, the regulatory body noted that it provides bursary support, sibling discounts, scholarships: as a family with 2 children this sibling discount has been particularly helpful. Also as my family went down the sad route of divorce due to domestic abuse and alcoholism, the school helped me and my children with bursary so that we could continue the children’s education without further disruption to their lives. They also helped by the school therapist came and saw my youngest child in particular at normally a cost of £50/session but she and they agreed, as I could not afford this, that it was better served the children if she could help pro bono via the school. The school have been my life saver as it is has been so supportive in our dire hour of need with a partial bursary, but also for those 7 fully paying years where the sibling discount helped too.

The school is a lovely gathering point for everyone in the surrounding area. They do summer camp where anyone is welcomed. Summer fair with music and games, stalls etc for the entire community and it is free to come and join insist down with picnics and blankets and watch a game of cricket on the lawn. There is Christmas Fair and again everyone is welcome and it is a lovely and warm feeling meeting new people and all in a good cause as the school supports so many charities locally. Our children get involved and get an understanding why it is so important to support charities and help others. They visit the YARD and see how children with a learning difficulty could benefit for the schools help and what can they do to help. They had visits from the Blind...
dog society to explain how we support their charity and get hands on. The School does so much charity work and has a very important role in teaching children how important it is to look around us and see if we can help/support inn anyway. We choose new charities each year and all kids gets involved as do we the parents. We strive every year to give back by so many means and ways. The school helps when in need and as a community it support lots of local charities who them too would lose out if the school lost it status.

It has personally for me been a life saver in difficult times and take that away would be detrimental I think as surely my family and I cannot be the only one in this situation.

I had already looked to put my children in state school had a partial bursary not been granted, but I was shocked to find out my local catchment school was full. Flora Stevens, my next closest Blackhall was also over subscribed for these two year groups, Sciennes was my third attempt same there. So you would have all of “us” families who would burden an already burdened city with schools bursting at the seams and over subscribed before us coming in to. Where do you suggest our children would go. Shall we cancel our jobs and have them placed across town in various places having to spend hours a day driving left right and centre to pick them up miles away from where we live and as a single parent how am I supposed to keep a job then as well. I have no child maintenance from my ex so all hangs on me and I currently work for myself but ,am trying to get back into employment.

One huge risk with this bill is that it will see more families moving into state provided education which is already bursting at the seams as I mentioned I have personal experience with this and struggling to provide for the students within the state system; which we also support through our taxes. Cargilfield also provides a wide range of opportunities for the local community, specifically Cramond Primary but also reaches out to the wider Scottish Schools Community by holding days such as Wind Instrument / Orchestral days/Summer activities weeks /Holiday activity weeks.

If this recommendation is brought forward into law then there will be an additional cost of £100,00 that the school will need to manage. As a parent I imagine a significant portion of this will be through increased fees, thereby undoing the hard work instigated and supported over the last decade across all the Independent Schools in Scotland.

Independent Schools and Cargilfield in particular provides military bursarys, bursary support, sibling discounts (as mentioned above) and scholarships. I imagine all of these as well as the level of the current fees will be under threat if this is passed into law. Put this together with the increase in employer contributions to the STPS, 33 % increase from 1 September 2019 there is likely to be a rush to the border for those who can avoid Scotland’s continuing discriminatory tax system. I urge you to consider the impact on the current state schools: an influx of pupils whose parents can no longer pay for the independent schools, a decrease in the additional activities and support
provided by the independent schools. It is unclear whether, given the proposed bill to charge rates, independent schools will continue to be viewed as charities, surely this needs to be addressed before passing this bill? I urge you to consider again all the beneficial work the Independent Schools in Scotland do and ensure this bill is not passed into law.