LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

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

SUBMISSION FROM ANONYMOUS

I am writing as a very concerned member of the public with regard the non-domestic rates review for independent schools.

I am fully aware of the financial stresses that all public sectors are under as I work for the NHS and have done for many years. I am a mother of 3 and my children started off at the local primary school. Unfortunately my youngest really struggled from nursery as he needed structure and guidance but with 3.5 hours free play available this was difficult. Within the first term of Primary 1 he was quickly labelled the naughty child as his concentration span was very short and he was easily distracted. This gave my husband and I huge cause for concern as we managed his behaviour at home with a busy task-oriented environment in which he thrived. I enquired about how we could best support our son or if the school could provide additional support to be told that he “was not bad enough” to warrant learning support. Having seen other children go through school with that label I was adamant it wouldn’t happen to my son if I could help him.

Thankfully my husband and I were fortunate enough to be in a position to seek alternative schooling and with the support of St Mary's Prep School, Melrose, my son started there. He was quickly supported by their wonderful learning support unit and was identified as possibly having ADHD. With the support of the school and CAMS he is doing very well and after a year of learning support he no longer requires extra tuition and thrives as an active member of the class & school. He is in his fourth year at the school and I still feel guilty that we needed to go private to give him the support he needed. The public schools are full of hard working caring teachers but they are pushed to their limits with current capacity and struggle to meet the needs of the individuals in their care.

My grave concern is if the private sector schools have to pay full non-domestic rates it will raise school fees and push children from the private sector back into the public sector. The public sector is already stretched and currently failing some of our children and I cannot see how an influx from the private sector, if the fees are raised as a consequence of increased rates, can be managed. A recent survey by the National Education Union highlighted that 40% of teachers did not see themselves employed as teachers within 5 years. I am fully aware that the teaching staff within the

I am therefore against the withdrawal of charitable status being removed from private schools. I understand how the Governments initial response is to view it as a way to make money however have the consequences of their actions been considered
fully? My faith in public sector staff is not in question as I know personally health and teaching staff want to support patients and pupils however they are both leaving their respective professions and staff retention and recruitment is an issue which speaks volumes. If this Bill is passed there needs to be a large investment both financially and structurally as to how we can meet the educational and developmental needs of our children, the future workforce.