LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE
CALL FOR VIEWS ON THE NON-DOMESTIC RATES (SCOTLAND) BILL
SUBMISSION FROM ANONYMOUS
Barclay Review into Non Domestic Rates Bill

Contrary to many of the public preconceptions about parents who send their children to a private school, my husband and I both felt we had no option but to move our daughters out of main stream state schools when they were aged 9 and 10. While we appreciate we are lucky to be able to afford to send our girls to a private school, we both work full time in stressful jobs and make many financial sacrifices in order to protect their education. This bill, should it be passed, gives us both serious concerns that we will not be able to continue to fund their education privately and will have no option but to send them back to the local school which we know will struggle to support the support for learning needs of my younger daughter.

Furthermore, in the current economic climate, we know our income will not increase enough to cover the standard annual fee rise. The significant rise in school fees that will result from this bill will make independent schooling less accessible for many and result in a more elitist education system. This would be a great loss.

Rather than focus on the impact on the independent schools, we want to provide evidence as to why we strongly feel that we should not be placing any more pressure on our state schools. We don’t believe that they have the resources (teachers, school size, specialist resources etc) to accommodate the additional intake of pupils for parents who cannot afford the significant fee uplift that this rates bill will give us.

We have two daughters (currently age 13 & 10.) We strongly believe that, as quiet but diligent girls, they were both being disadvantaged trying to get an education in a class/local school with insufficient resources. The teachers were clearly struggling with large class sizes, multiple children with additional support needs and very limited support for learning resources. From our position, the situation was intolerable, and our children were suffering.

My elder daughter is academically clever, however due to behavioural issues in her class at the time and an absent teacher on long term sick, she spent a year without any progression. When reviewing high schools, we discovered she was a year behind where she should have been. She was clever but simply hadn’t been taught. The school had struggled for the whole year trying to resolve the staff situation but with no success. This, to us, was something that drove our action to move to the independent sector. She repeated a year to bring her education to where it should have been.
My younger daughter is a different situation but her story demonstrates the same struggle that all state schools face. I had spent 5 years pushing their school, certain that there was a learning issue that needed addressed – after 5 years of pushing with zero success, we sought a private assessment to validate that she has dyslexia. While the diagnosis, pushed the school to provide support. The support that was available to her was minimal. She was working twice as many others, yet still struggling to keep up. Her confidence was rock bottom and she developed a dread and terror of school. In a school with so many additional support needs, she was being quietly overlooked.

We are both very much strong advocates for equal and fair education for all. The decision we took to move our girls was not taken lightly and not just for the financial burden it places on us. If anything, we felt saddened that our state system was struggling to such an extent that we felt there was no alternative option for us.

We both felt that shouting at the local school to deal with our concerns was futile. The teachers and management teams want to help, they care but they are limited in what they can do with such limited resources. We simply do not believe that the state system can absorb the additional demand for school places that will result from this rate rise.

We know that there are many other families who made the same choices we did. Not part of the wealthy or upper classes, just down to earth, hard-working families, trying to do the best for our children’s education and, as a by-product, reducing the demand on the already overstretched state education system.

Since moving our girls into the independent school, both have thrived but the long-term financial pressure it places on us as parents is hard. It is always at the forefront of our minds. Is it worth it? Yes - because our children’s happiness and education are paramount, but our pockets are not deep and we are being gradually excluded from the independent schools due to financial limitations.