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 young men who have had the privilege of attending St Columba’s Independent School in Kilmacolm. We may be privileged to have had this opportunity but could not be considered to be rich or elite, just a family with education as a priority who were unable to find appropriate schooling provided by the state. Both my sons started St Columba’s having had particularly difficult, and lacking, experiences elsewhere. They were only able to do so with substantial bursaries provided by the school. Having this opportunity has meant that they were not only able to meet their academic potential, but have the appropriate level of pastoral care available to help them rebuild trust in adults, and experience a healthy set of extra curricular activities designed to help them become rounded adults.

Prior to applying for a bursary to attend St Columba’s one of my sons attended a Creative Writing Course, one of many classes provided for the wider St Columba’s community by the school. He did so for 3 years which allowed him to develop his language skills to their full potential, which had previously gone without support despite his intellect. He now has a very promising career ahead of him. Although not essential academically, the school also facilitated a bursary for 6th year attendance for my eldest who was then able to work on his underdeveloped social skills. This has meant he has been confident enough to hold committee places in his university karate club for the last two years. These may sound like small achievements, but without St Columba’s providing these opportunities my sons would not be the young men they are today, both academically fulfilled, and socially adjusted solid Scottish citizens. I can say with 100% confidence that without the support of St Columba’s this would not be the case. I find it nonsensical to remove the relief in line with state schools, when we should be using this type of independent school as a template for the development of all young people!

Our school estimates the proposed change in non domestic rates will cost £160000 per year. This will undoubtedly impact upon school community projects, extra curricular activities and the Bursary Scheme as increased fees will reduce the number of bursaries that may be offered. The school would also have to consider what developmental opportunities it can then offer. It would be tragic to think that these opportunities will not continue to be offered to other young people, and that the current standard of development for all young people in the school will be reduced.