

## Riley, Kate

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**From:** Julia Devanthery [REDACTED] >  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 14, 2020 12:02 PM  
**To:** City Council; Riley, Kate; City Manager  
**Subject:** Support of the Tobin School/VLUS project

Dear Mayor Siddiqui, Vice-Mayor Mallon, City Councillors and City Manager:

We write in support of the Tobin School/VLUS project. Cambridge has a unique opportunity in this moment: to not only build a net-zero school, but also to address increasing enrollment in our public schools and move us forward in our quest for universal preschool. This is a critical matter of equity in our city, and we should not turn away from it.

We are thinking about the families in our community whose lives would be changed by having greater access to free or affordable preschool choices—including perhaps our own. We know that high-quality early education is vital to a child's long-term academic success. As a city, we have been discussing this issue for years. And yet we still have many families who are unable to access those opportunities for their own children, through the luck of their birthdays or lottery numbers. As we are sure you know, private preschool options in the area are simply out of reach for many families. We are preparing to welcome twins into our family and find ourselves completely overwhelmed as we learn the cost of care for two children at once. We now have a great opportunity to move the City closer to truly providing equal educational opportunity, and we should take it.

We know that opposition has been raised because of concerns about traffic and the number of children who would be served at this location. We are dismayed that our neighbors would respond to such an important and innovative project in such a negative way. As with everything, we have to ask ourselves what we want to prioritize. Is congestion during limited hours more important than early childhood education? When we say "there will be too many children in this building," what does that mean for the families whose children we refuse to make room for? Of course, we must do all that we can to address unintended consequences and make sure that we minimize any undesirable community impacts, but the ultimate priority should be providing our children and families with the opportunity for success. We talk often about an achievement gap in our public schools, but what we really have is an opportunity gap. It begins in preschool, and we have the chance to move toward closing it. Let's have the courage to do that, and ensure that all our children have access to a high quality, affordable, early childhood experience.

Thank you.

Julia Devanthery & Samuel Breen  
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