

Riley, Kate

From: Kaitlyn Byrne [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, January 14, 2020 12:50 PM
To: City Council; Riley, Kate; City Manager
Subject: Tobin School/VLUS Project

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

I am writing 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.

As the parent of a young child who will not benefit from the additional preschool seats this new school will provide, I'm thinking about the families in my community whose lives would be changed by having greater access to free or affordable preschool choices. Me and my husband grew up in Cambridge all of our lives, graduated from Cambridge Rindge and Latin and both work for the City of Cambridge, dedicating our lives to serving the youth of Cambridge, and we got waitlisted on getting into the Department of Human Services Preschool Programs. We are devastated. 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, like us, we still have many families who are unable to access those opportunities for their own children. As I'm sure you know, private preschool options in the area are simply out of reach for us and many families. We now have a great opportunity to move us closer to truly providing equal educational opportunity in this city, and we should take it.

I know that opposition has been raised because of concerns about traffic and the number of children who would be served at this location. 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 impact on abutters, 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,

Kaitlyn Kelley
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