

Madame Chair and Members of the Committee:

I'm disappointed I can't be there to testify in person, but I appreciate the opportunity to provide you my written testimony.

I was born and raised in East Helena – I am proud of my district and what it does for our children. I lived on the East Coast for 10 years, but specifically moved back to my home town to raise my children, aware of the education they would receive in their most formable years.

Having an outsider decide what is best for my community, for my children, is extremely frustrating. It has been said that currently East Helena doesn't have a tax base to support a high school, but as the law stands right now we can't even approach the possibility. We are not asking for you to approve a new high school, we are asking to have the right to make the decision for ourselves.

Being able to walk the halls of the elementary and junior high schools in our district, as a parent and volunteer, and have interactions with a majority of the students, teachers and administrators is priceless. I am confident in where I send my children every morning, and more than confident with the quality of education they are receiving. I am honored to be part of such amazing growth, and thankful that I am encouraged to take an active role in their education.

As a parent and a member of the East Helena Community, I ask you to let us determine how to meet the educational needs of our children. Our schools have won countless awards and I am confident that if we are able to build a high school in our community, it will be just as successful as our elementary and junior high schools. I will continue to support our school board's fight to allow the community to have local control. It is the right decision, and what is right for the kids of East Helena.

Thank you for your consideration,

Heather Ireland  
(406) 465-0231  
heather.m.ireland@gmail.com