

Feb 16, 2015

Governor Haley,

Firstly, allow me to apologize for the handwritten letter - I'm home with my daughter on President's Day and away from my computer and "working" printer, but felt compelled to write you today.

I'm a parent of a child that attends Clarendon County School District Three - Walker Gamble Elementary in New Zion to be exact. My husband and I are both graduates of this district as well. He is from Turbeville and I'm from the Pleasant Grove Community of Sumter County. We originally lived near my family until our daughter was born, and then moved to District Three in Turbeville in order to make sure she could be enrolled in Walker Gamble. Like so many other children, our daughter has blossomed and thrived at Walker Gamble, and we feel blessed that we have the privilege of sending her there. When she first started, she enjoyed music

and art, and those days were her favorite days of the week. Of course budget cuts took those away, and now none of our students within the district benefit from these programs. Our budgets have been slashed to the point that even simple upkeep of our buildings must be set aside to insure that the children receive what they need within the classroom.

Every year my husband and I - as all those in this district do - pay the highest taxes in Clarendon County. Some of the highest in the state I understand. But still, District Three struggles to make ends meet, yet it seems that schools in the other Clarendon County school districts are faring far better. Our district representatives have reached out on numerous occasions to Clarendon County officials pleading the case for the schools and our students, but it seems a deaf ear leans more towards keeping the funds within the larger school districts. Yet our

district regularly post the best scores in the county, not to mention some of the most impressive scores in the state. It's even been explained that because our students seem to excel academically, as well as athletically, that we don't have a need for extra funds. That the funds must stay within the other school districts to help improve their scores. Yet during Homecoming, during our annual parade put on by the students, our children must watch a band from a neighboring Clarendon County School march where the East Clarendon Wolverine band should be. But yet our students are told our district isn't important enough for a music program. How do explain to children and teenagers that, even though they excel academically, the adults that control the funds don't feel that they deserve any more funds for their school. How do you explain that even though more money

comes out of our pockets than anywhere else in the county, we can't make ends meet. They have lived under the rumor for several years now that our schools might close and they would be bused to another school in another district twenty minutes away. This is unfair to the students, teachers, and families that have shown nothing but dedication to the schools and the education of our area kids. Our children deserve the same considerations of students within the other Clarendon County Districts 1 & 2, and they should be allowed to thrive within their own school, in their hometown. We are exhausting our resources at Walker Hamble and East Clarendon. We have fundraisers to help, but with the amount of taxes that so many residents already have to pay, it can be hard to explain why more money is needed. We should not be in debt. Our children should not have to suffer. Why are other districts benefiting from

our tax money, yet our district is barely hanging on?

Governor Haley, many consider you to be only worried about bringing business and industry to our state, and in the process ignoring the plight of education within South Carolina. I understand the need of business and commerce, but I also know you are a proud parent who understands that children are our greatest resource. We are raising some of the best and brightest here in Clarendon County District Three. Won't you please get involved in this issue and bring to light what is happening here? We are struggling, and we see no help coming from County officials. I know if you take an interest in our plight, at least maybe someone will stand up for our little school district and our students.

Thank you -
Jenna Windham, Timberville, SC.
Carson Windham - 4th grade, Walker
Hamble Ele.
5