



SDBAB,

You have the opportunity to save a community and let the PE school district continue to grow minds and lives.

When I was 10 my single mother moved to Tremain in Dousman. We moved from Genesee Depot and Magee Elementary where I was a terror on the playground and classroom due to an abusive stepfather at home. Eagle Elementary became a fresh start in life. I entered 4th grade and I didn't know it at the time but even at that early age your school district helped shape my life. I received additional school care through a speech pathologist so I could pronounce the letter R and also support through the guidance counselor for children that had gone through a divorce. As my mom turned her life around with a new stepfather, I got a brand new start with new friends, athletics, music and great classrooms.

In 6th grade, we were introduced to a brand new set of students from a town over. I remember going skating in Mukwonago while being forced to socialize and become friends with this group of strangers from Palmyra. This social setting and conjoining of two schools made us be social, open and accepting of others helping us grow at an early stage compared to other school districts. My class was the first class to enjoy tackle football in 8th grade at PE middle school. The early learning of teamwork and trust started there which led my 2002 class to PE's first rock valley conference football championship in 2001.

The education that I received at Palmyra-Eagle High School put me on the career path that I have enjoyed so far. The smaller class sizes and amazing support from teachers is something that my UW-Whitewater college peers did not get from their high schools. I ran track for 4 years at UW-Whitewater becoming an all-American 3 times. Former PE high school teachers kept in touch and continued to support and push me. I have tried every year to give back through the PE golf outing and am willing to give back more and lobby some of my successful classmates to do the same.

From UW-Whitewater, I went to Los Angeles for 3 years getting the opportunity to work the phones for successful talent agents at William Morris Endeavor often saving Harvard grads with their phone skills. They took a chance on a student from Palmyra-Eagle High School. I was a producer for "Sport Science" before the economy tanked bringing me back to Wisconsin. Currently, I am a full-time entrepreneur and believe my education within the PE school district has helped me achieve great things for Milwaukee and Wisconsin. I have opened 2 successful restaurants, 1 arcade bar, 2 coworking spaces, a creative agency and a half million dollar in sales event planning company. Not bad for 36 and finishing 7th in my high school class of 79 students.

The teachers and community of small towns like Palmyra and Eagle are what made me the man I am today and the type of place I will be looking to move soon when I start a family

Michael Sampson
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#2

Nick Conrad
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November 7, 2019

Dear School District Boundary Appeals Board,

I am writing this letter to you in support of the Palmyra-Eagle Area School District (PEASD). It's my hope that after careful consideration of all of the information presented to you over the course of the past few months, dissolution will not occur.

I am a 2007 graduate of Palmyra-Eagle High School and my entire K-12 experience occurred in three different buildings within PEASD. The experiences that I had at Eagle Elementary, Palmyra-Eagle Middle School, and Palmyra-Eagle High School put me on my current career path as a public school educator in the State of Wisconsin. After high school, I was able to coach basketball at PEHS while completing my undergraduate work at UW-Whitewater. The bonds that were formed with my former coaches and the staff members allowed me to feel comfortable in taking the leap into education, despite the uncertain times that education was facing in the State after 2011.

Since leaving Palmyra-Eagle High School in 2012, I have been the head boys' basketball coach at a public school in a Milwaukee suburb and a public school teacher in two different school districts. It was my high school teachers and coaches at Palmyra-Eagle that inspired me to pursue a career as a teacher and a coach. I learned the value of what it takes to be successful and witnessed leadership by example from my teachers. Being at a small school allowed me to grow at my own pace. Had I been forced to attend a larger school, I'm not sure I would be teaching and leading students full-time today, as my confidence wouldn't have had a chance to grow.

Admittedly, my parents thought about open-enrolling me out of PEASD and to a neighboring district before I entered seventh-grade. Along with my asking them to reconsider, the District improved both its facilities and reputation through a referendum in the early 2000s. This demonstrated that the community did support the District, despite previously failed referendums. So many times I look back and think about if I

would've ended up in education today had I transferred to another school district. While I can't say for sure, I know that I wouldn't have made a connection with my teachers in a larger school like I did in the smaller Palmyra-Eagle district. I have no idea what I'd be doing today, but I wouldn't have had the chance to impact all of the students and players that I've had the ability to teach and coach over the past eight years.

In closing, I'd like you to think of the economic impacts that will occur with dissolution. While I understand the voters have spoken, please remember that school referendums in this district (and many others) have failed before, but then eventually passed. Sometimes people don't truly realize the impact that a school has until it's too late. Please don't let this be one of those times.

Sincerely,

Nick Conrad
PEHS Class of 2007

#3

Good evening School district Boundary appeals Board-man I do not envy you guys at all-the decisions you will be making will affect thousands of people in and around our district.

My name is Sue Fischer and I am a teacher at Palmyra-Eagle High School. Actually, I am more than a teacher-I am an advocate and a proud member of the Panther family. You see this is not just a job for me. I feel that I am part of a family and that the district is my second home. I consider the, over 3000 students that I have taught over the years as my kids. In fact, most of the board are former students of mine. I am here today to talk to you about my fear for the future of this district.

As a teacher at the PE school district for the past 33 years, this has been one of the hardest things I have ever had to deal with. To see my students facing the uncertainty of their school is devastating. I am truly worried about them and what will happen to them next year.

The opposition is accusing us of mismanaging funds, overpaying teachers and Cadillac insurance policies. None of which is true. It is really hard for staff members and students to hear the negative comments and accusations about a district that we all love.

We at PE have been working on a shoe-string budget for as long as I can remember. We are some of the lowest-paid teachers in the state (in fact we are ranked 390 out of 446 districts Many of the teachers have been frozen at their current salary step since Act 10 was passed in 2011. The board has changed our insurance multiple times increasing the deductible each time and now we are among the highest. Even under these circumstances, we have done quite well. Our schools either meet or exceed expectations on the state report card. Our ACT scores are at or above the state average. We have graduates who have been accepted at some of the best colleges in the nation. I often wonder what we could have done with proper funding. We have had successes on the athletic fields as well. Teams and individuals making it to state and teams winning conference championships. Now the kids who were contributing members to a championship team may sit the bench or not even make the team where they are headed

As a staff, we felt blindsided by the school board back in November. This was the first we knew that we were in this much trouble. We had heard rumblings but never realized our circumstances were this bad. At that meeting, we as a staff were told the message was simple "Pass this operational referendum or we dissolve." We had been pinching our pennies for years, both personally in salaries and benefits, and in our classroom budgets yet here we were facing a do or die situation. We were never given a chance to give our input on how we might be able to work together to save our district. We were never asked for our input in finding ways to cut dollars.

The combination of three things: lack of state funding, open enrollment and decreased overall enrollment has put us in this situation. Two of these things we have no control over-the third open enrollment we have been working actively to try to draw more people into our district.

Most of the open enrollment students have never even set foot in our buildings. Who are they to judge how we are doing?

If we can make the district unique-4 day a week schools, or maybe an environmentally based charter school using the beautiful kettle moraine forest that surrounds us, maybe we can draw more students into the district and revive it. Are you willing to work with us to come up with viable solutions that allow our students to remain part of this small rural school where they feel as though they are part of a family?

One of my biggest fears is that this will cause a domino effect in surrounding districts. I am afraid what is happening to us will happen to the other districts who are on the verge of going to referendum. Something needs to change on the state level so that this doesn't happen to other school districts. Somehow we have to find a way to fund the basic necessities for our kids. Some of the state funds that were taken away from us have to be given back. It is not fair that our students are the ones paying the ultimate price. It is not fair that small districts like ours can no longer exist because of the insufficiencies in current funding. We will continue to fight for what is right for our kids and I hope you will all join us in the fight.

Since that awful day in April, I have spent many sleepless nights worrying not only about how I will move on but also how the kids of PE will move on. How will they be able to handle when someone (who doesn't even know them) tells them where they now have to go to school. What colors they now have to wear with pride (no longer Purple) what teams they have to cheer for on a Friday night (not our beloved panthers). I fear for the obstacles they will face-some of them will suffer because of bigger class sizes, or less special education services.in many cases, they will just become another face in the crowd. I wish I could be there for them to help them make the transition but the reality is that I don't know where I'll be. The thought of teaching somewhere else isn't something I even remotely considered.

The current plan that Whitewater and Mukwonago are considering requires state law to be changed. You can not consolidate 3 districts into one. If you have to change laws why not change them to help keep our school alive? Why not work with us to come up with a plan that saves a school that means so much to so many children?

Susan Fischer
Palmyra-Eagle Math Physics teacher-year 34
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My name is Jill Blaedow. I would like to welcome you to what I have called my "Home Away from Home" for the past 17 years. I am a proud second grade teacher here at Eagle Elementary School, a proud mom of two PEASD graduates (2010 and 2012), a district resident (since 1990), a graduate of PEASD, the spouse of a PEASD graduate, and remarkably, a "graduate" of Eagle's very first Kindergarten. Yes, back when the school was known as Eagle State Graded School, I did indeed attend the first ever section of morning Kindergarten. The country kids who rode the school bus attended the morning section while the town kids went in the afternoon. Of course, by the time we were big six year olds, we were all one big group for first grade with Mrs. Treloar.

I feel that it is important for you to hear that brief biography of me so that you may better understand the remarks I'll be making as I ask you today to help us find a way to preserve the Palmyra-Eagle Area School District.

Thank you for your time and commitment and for your willingness to be involved in this unprecedented and vital process. It is very much appreciated. You have a monumental task before you. In fact, you will soon be making a decision which will impact more lives than any decision you've probably ever made before. The outcome of your decision will affect current students and staff, their families, residents across the Palmyra Eagle Area School District, business owners, and more...in sum, thousands of lives will be affected by what you decide here.

You will need to consider many factors as this process unfolds, but none as important as the educational welfare of the children in this district. The educational welfare of the children who choose to attend this district is at stake- their sense of community; of belonging, has been rocked by the events that have led us to where we are now. Their very sense of identity, security and trust have all been shaken. Families choose to live in this district because of our schools. They want what we have to offer- excellent staff, up to date curriculum and materials, research based instructional

practices, small class sizes, high academic standards, countless opportunities for extra curricular involvement...and all of this in a beautiful, rural setting. You realize that we're pretty amazing when you take time to reflect on these facts.

So how did we come to be in this dire financial position? We shouldn't be all the factors I've mentioned along with all the other people who have spoken to you or submitted written statements, belie the reality of where we find ourselves. This district serves the needs of around 600 students and their families. Families who have chosen us; families who trust us to educate their children; to help them grow into the successful adults that they have the potential to be. The choice made by these families as they consider the best possible educational welfare of their children is what needs to be foremost in the decision to remain an option for all who wish to be part of the PEASD.

As a way to illustrate the point I'm making about the monumental decision before you and the impact it will have on current and even future generations, both in this area and out in the wide world, I'm going to share a story about my brother. While there are many, many things I could share about this district and the influences it has had upon so many individuals, I believe this story will help illustrate the unique and important niche the PEASD occupies in this area of larger, and more suburban districts that surround us.

Years ago, in 1970, my older brother Will, graduated eighth grade from Eagle State Graded School. At that time, Eagle students went to High School in Mukwonago. He started his freshman year there and in his words, he hated it. The school was overcrowded at that time- he recalls that classes were held in hallways, with tape marking lines on the floor indicating where desks could be placed so as to allow for the passage of students between classes. He tells of how the Eagle students were ridiculed by the Mukwonago kids- they were told to go back to "Birdtown".

He made no new friends and no connections to the teachers either. It was clear to the Eagle kids that they weren't welcome and they weren't wanted.

Unbeknownst to my brother and his Eagle classmates, they would not have to endure this beyond their freshman year of high school, for that year an agreement with Palmyra was settled on and starting in the fall of 1971, the Eagle students had the opportunity to attend Palmyra High School. What my brother found waiting for him in Palmyra felt like a breath of fresh air- a new beginning. He met students who came from farming families. They became friends and he spent time working with them in their dairy barns and hay fields. Now, my brother had and still has an amazing knack for things mechanical- he can fix, build and repair anything he puts his mind to. Palmyra had an extensive auto shop, wood shop and agriculture program for him to explore and develop his skills in. As a direct result of this environment and his involvement in these pursuits, he made a decision to pursue dairy farming for his career. After graduating from Palmyra High School in 1974, he attended the University of Wisconsin- Madison and pursued a degree in Dairy Science. He met a woman, also in the agriculture program. They fell in love, and married after they graduated. They started their own business of operating a dairy farm and continued this life path together- farming, raising a family, and affecting lives around them by advocating for their chosen occupation, judging in cattle shows and more. Just recently, they retired from farming and sold their fine herd of registered Holsteins to a young, recently married farmer who is embarking on his new life. The ripples of the impact Palmyra High School with its rural setting and agricultural opportunities had on my brother, continue to impact lives all these decades later.

So what does this story have to do with us; with you; with why we are here? It would not have happened...it could not have happened...without PEASD. The impact on this young man's life to see and learn and experience what this small, rural school had to offer was directly a result of his time at Palmyra High School. He had that opportunity to discover and explore his

passions, as have hundreds, thousands, of other students who have been fortunate enough to attend and graduate from our schools. That opportunity is why we're here- preserve it...preserve us. Give us the chance to find a way to exist. Allow us to change, allow us adapt, but please, please allow us to continue for future generations. It is in the best interest of our students now and the students to come- their educational welfare is at stake.

Our schools, our community, our future.

Thank you.

#5

Dear School District Boundaries Appeals Board and DPI,

Thank you for taking the time to listen to our story at PEASD, before making your decision in this unprecedented situation. I hope after hearing all the wonderful things about PEASD, with stories of successes of our graduates, the quality education that our current students are receiving, the dedicated staff and supportive community, you will come to the decision NOT to dissolve Palmyra-Eagle Area School District.

I come to you as a former student of Eagle Elementary and a 1985 graduate of PEASD. My husband and I are both graduates of Palmyra-Eagle High School. We chose to buy our home in Palmyra in 1987 to raise our family. We raised 3 daughters who have all attended Palmyra Elementary and graduated from PEHS. We have a grandchild attending 4K at Palmyra Elementary, since my daughter and her husband have recently purchased a home in Palmyra, where they planned to send their children. I have been blessed to have had the opportunity to teach at Eagle Elementary for 29 years, teaching approximately 600 students. This year, I am teaching a former students' daughter. **Generations are choosing Palmyra-Eagle.**

My parents made the decision to move from Franklin to Eagle when I was in the 5th grade. They built our home here in Eagle where my mother still resides, supporting PEASD. She retired as the Eagle Elementary Secretary after 30 years and now that she is on a fixed income, continues to support PEASD. I moved from a large school district where unfortunately I have few memories from my first 4 years there. Mrs. Dixon was my 5th and 6th grade teacher at Eagle Elementary. I have brunch with my former teacher Mrs. Dixon, Phy. Ed. teacher Ms. Marty, and band teacher Mrs. Whitney, retirees from Eagle Elementary. I have lifelong friendships with classmates from when I started here at Eagle Elementary. These are a few of the many benefits of a small school.

During the Middle School years, Eagle students had to go to Palmyra Middle School (at that time it was part of their elementary school) and I remember, experiencing a lack of immediate acceptance into the group of Palmyra students who have been together since kindergarten, we were the "Eagle kids" coming into their school. Looking back, this is typical behavior with the given situation. We learned about each other and found out quickly we were all experiencing a lot of changes and we formed friendships that I hold dear to this day. Because of this experience, I had started a Pen Pal program with a parent for elementary students in Eagle and Palmyra schools to get to become familiar with one another before joining in Middle School, which has proven successful. In addition, we offer the opportunity to attend a 4th grade lock-in where Eagle and Palmyra 4th graders come together, and sixth grade classes from Eagle and Palmyra have been given opportunities to participate in joint activities to get to know their future classmates, until they become unified. If you decide to dissolve PEASD, what will be in place for our students as they are forced into a situation where they are the "Eagle/Palmyra kids" dispersed into surrounding schools?

I have wonderful memories of my time at PEHS, where I received an excellent education, which gave me the foundation for college and many opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities. I was in High School over 30 years ago, and I remember being called into the gymnasium when we were told that Palmyra High School would change its name to Palmyra-Eagle. We came together to UNITE as 2 communities into one school. It was an amazing thing to witness and an event I still remember. I am a proud graduate of Palmyra-Eagle High School. Now, we have a large group of Eagle residents asking to DISSOLVE PEASD, they do not and they say they will not support our District. A majority of Palmyra residents do and say they will continue to support PEASD, even if that means there is only a school in Palmyra. If you dissolve our District, what will happen to those High School students' rank in our small rural school and then become part of a larger school district? What will happen to our

Junior/Senior athletes to help them continue participating in sports? What will be in place to help them cope with this situation in which they had no control?

After graduating from UW-Whitewater with an Education degree, I knew I wanted to come back to my roots and teach at Eagle Elementary School. I was hired as a First Grade teacher in 1991. I have had wonderful mentors and coworkers during my 29 years at Eagle Elementary. I have seen many changes. I am on my 8th Principal here. We were expanding with more and more subdivisions being built, families supporting their community school, that we added on to our building. Then came OE/School Choice. At first there was a cap on the amount of students that can leave a district because it could potentially devastate a school or District. I am not a supporter of Open Enrollment as it is currently and feel it needs to be revised. I do support families in making the choice for their children. I respect the decision of my friends who chose open enrollment. My concern is with the entitlement of open enrollment with loose guidelines and the tax dollars it takes away from the community school. There are parents who buy a home in Eagle and never step foot into our schools, they have no intention of sending their children to PEASD, holding that home hostage to any families who may send their children to PEASD. OE is a choice, but it shouldn't take away the choice for families who CHOOSE PALMYRA-EAGLE. We have OE families recruiting families to choose Mukwonago, hoping we won't have enough students to keep our doors open. I can say that under one of those 8 Principals was when I saw the mass exodus. We had 3 sections of grades and now we have one, we had over 300 students at Eagle Elementary, now we have approximately 150 students. People who want PEASD to dissolve, state that we are a 4:1 ratio of students to teacher. As a Board, you know we don't take the total population of students and divide by all employed staff. I have had as many as 26 students in 2nd grade to my lowest this year with 15 students. Instead of helping make things better for their community school, for various reasons, parents chose to send their children to other schools. And

when some of those families left, they took their perceptions with them and still to this day are harboring those bad feelings towards our District. We have continued to improve our schools with up to date teaching resources and curriculum that meet State Standards, Professional Development of its teachers and opportunities for all children to learn and excel. I have read from someone who believes that PEASD should dissolve that we are offering "a bare bones education" which is far from the truth. We hired a seasoned Reading Support teacher who duals as a Gifted Teacher to meet the needs of our students, our Art teacher has a wealth of experience working on curriculum and has worked with DPI as well as getting our students artwork shared at our nation's capital! At our elementary school, we offer S.T.E.A.M. classes in our Makerspace, academic clubs like Spelling Bee, Geography Bee, Anthology writing, Lego Robotics, leadership/community outreach opportunities with S.T.A.R.S. (Students Together Accomplishing Real Stuff), Mathlete, Math 24, Americorp school garden, and we collaborate with the Eagle Nature Trail offering unique opportunities for our students. We continue to offer enriching activities and programs, because our students are worth it!

Eagle Elementary is a "family". I believe we treat each student as if they were our own child. I have paid off a student's lunch account so they can eat, brought snack for the child who came to school hungry, pulled over to offer a ride to school because the child was walking in frigid temps without proper clothing and even took in a student and her siblings because the family didn't know anyone and was going to take the kids out of school for a week. These are some examples of what we as teachers choose to do in a small school. I have had the opportunity to work with and learn from wonderful students/families and amazing teachers/coworkers. I can not see myself anywhere else but here in PEASD, my Home away from Home. If PEASD dissolves, what happens to the staff? What will be in place to help our teachers continue to educate and provide for their families?

My eldest daughter's calling is Music and PEASD offered her the opportunities and experiences to pursue her music interests. These opportunities prepared her to further her music education at a college level. She accepted a band teacher position in Georgia where she also gives private lessons. Palmyra-Eagle High School prepared her to follow her dreams. Our middle daughter graduated in the top 10 of her class while also being a 12 sport athlete and taking graduate classes offered by Palmyra High School's Youth Options Program to earn her CNA. She contributes many of her successes to caring and supportive teachers and coaches. She has said that teachers like Ms. Fischer taught her more than just math. She taught her perseverance, how to work with others, and life skills. Alyssa continues to use these skills as she is pursuing her dream in the Health field at Carroll University. Our youngest daughter, has Special Needs, which brought different roads to travel than the older ones. She was enrolled in Palmyra's Early Childhood Program and her teachers were by my side when I went to Children's Hospital and asked questions on how they could provide a safe environment for our daughter. Makenna had an inclusive education. Teachers and aides would communicate with me what joy she brought to their class. I did seek out sending her to Lakeland in Elkhorn, a Special Ed. School because I thought it would be best to be with peers who were just like her. I was denied by both schools, Palmyra wouldn't let her go and Lakeland wouldn't accept her, due to the expense, unless I lived in Walworth County. I was told if I wanted her to attend Lakeland School that I would need to move there. This decision helped me work with the schools to help my daughter prepare for her future and the peers she shared classes with gave her wonderful life experiences. Makenna went to Prom, concerts, sporting events, just like her sisters, and her sisters supported her when she participated in Palmyra's Special Olympics. Makenna received a certificate of completion from PEASD and she continues to be a viable asset of the Palmyra community. She is now 24 and her former teachers, aides and classmates still enjoy seeing her and have stories to share. PEASD provided a solid foundation for each of our children's individual needs.

The people who believe PEASD should dissolve state *PEASD is a failing school district* but have no substantial evidence to back up this statement. Last year, Eagle Elementary earned 5 stars on the State Report card, significantly exceeding expectations. Recently released State Report Card showed Eagle Elementary was a 4 star, continuing to exceed expectations from last April's testing. We scored above the state average in both Math and ELA achievement. We showed significant school growth in the area of ELA. Palmyra-Eagle High School also exceeded expectations. We can attribute the decrease of overall score because we were mandated to test kids AFTER the April Referendum where families were just informed that residents would not support this District financially and we could potentially close. While some were celebrating, supporting families of PEASD were mourning, yet we remained Professional as our hearts were breaking. Neighbors are telling neighbors not to send their children to Eagle Elementary, that MASD has a better education and more opportunities. Realtors are listing houses in PEASD and including information to Mukwonago schools, I recently became aware that there is a Mukwonago School Board member who is also a realtor prematurely telling clients that PEASD will be dissolving and their home will become Mukwonago School District, there is a realtor who lives in Eagle has been referred to help families open enroll because she did with her children. Eagle Elementary has offered Realtor Open Houses to have them see our schools and ask questions so they can accurately inform future buyers, instead of hearsay. This last year, I have endured "bullying" by some ADULTS in this community on social media for my support of PEASD. Some of these people have stated that the reason they left our District was because their children were bullied. *Enough is enough! Stop the hate and corrupt tactics in our community.*

It was one year ago that the Palmyra-Eagle staff were presented with a video from our School Board President that informed us of the financial crisis that our District was in. As a community we were blindsided, we were

unaware of the financial predicament and given no time or opportunity to formulate any possible resolution. Our voice was acknowledged with the petition to appeal the decision of our Board to dissolve PEASD. Our voices need to be heard.

During this recent advisory referendum, the community had the opportunity to vote **should PEASD dissolve...?** People were confused and some even misled. As Citizens/Families of Eagle who Choose Mukwonago or Eagle Wisconsin Taxpayers mailed out stating **Fact: Vote YES to dissolve PEASD. Mukwonago School District WILL keep Eagle Elementary open and Whitewater School District is looking at keeping a school open in Palmyra.** This information misled families to thinking that if they vote yes they are saving our schools. I heard one of my students telling her friends that her parents voted YES so they(friends) could stay at Eagle Elementary. Staff overheard students arguing "Dude, your parents were supposed to vote no to keep our school!" "My parents voted yes, why did my parents vote yes?"

I hope you, as the SDBAB will see that PEASD is providing a quality education, our Board has stated we are in a financial crisis, partly because of funding of public schools and O/E out costing over \$3 million in funding, and Citizens/Families of Eagle who choose Mukwonago having another chance on changing the boundaries in which they live. They have stated that they will not stop recruiting our students and if we do not dissolve they will try and try again to annex Eagle into Mukwonago. So, I question if the people wanting to dissolve PEASD have the interest of the children or special interests, like *busses East. PEASD residents get to choose where to live and where to send their children to school. Now they want to dissolve the District in which they live and take away the choice of families who value the education in our small rural school.*

As a parent, resident and taxpayer, an alumni, and an educator of PEASD, I ask you, please do not dissolve Palmyra-Eagle School District and give us

the opportunity to find a solution to continue to give a quality education to students in this community who **CHOOSE PALMYRA-EAGLE** since 1896!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tamara Mueller". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Tamara Mueller

W1628 Marsh Rd.

Palmyra, WI 53156

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I began my work under contract at Palmyra-Eagle High School in 1994. Growing up in Milwaukee and attending John Marshall H.S., doing my field work and student teaching at Vincent and Kettle Moraine High Schools respectively, I never experienced the small rural atmosphere that P-E offered and immediately warmed up to the more intimate environment between myself, the staff, and students. After 5 years, despite still enjoying my job and the students, I left for a bigger district and more money to appease my wife. 12 years later I had the opportunity to return when a chemistry position opened up and I jumped on it. While I was aware I'd be taking a cut in pay, I missed the stronger connection I had shared with the school and my students. While our neighboring schools with bigger budgets have some tangibles we don't, our small setting offers a culture of connectedness and belonging I haven't seen in larger settings. It's only in this small school environment that I can stand in the halls during passing time and know virtually every student that walks by me. Based on my own experience, shy students seem more likely to approach me for help here than they were at the larger school I previously worked at.

I take exception to some derogatory statements made with regard to the education students receive in this district. I know at the high school level our overall score exceeded state expectations and was right in between that of Whitewater and Mukwonago's. With the resource period and school wide 9th hour study halls our Principal has implemented, I've never worked in an environment where students have more opportunity for one-on-one time with their teachers than at PEHS.

I am aware that this is an issue of dollars and cents that sentiment and emotion won't resolve, and you expressed to us that you need a plan. With regard to that, I feel it's important you know that we do in fact have people working on a couple of plans. However, please understand that this is a rather significant issue and we, as staff members and parents, were kept in the dark about this until fairly recently. For those of us that work here, live here, and value our school, this news took us completely by surprise but we're doing our utmost to deliver feasible alternatives in the amount of time we were given. Thanks for your time.

Respectfully,
Steven Armin
W3091 Koch Road
Ft. Atkinson, WI
262-593-8473

#7

Hello. My name is Kari Timm and for my entire career, I have had the pleasure of working in the Palmyra-Eagle Area School district. 19 years as a teacher, a coach, an athletic director, a dean of students and for the last 6 years as the middle and high school principal. I have stayed for many reasons, but the biggest reason is our students. I could tell you countless stories of success and just as many that would break your heart. But I believe that every school has these stories. Everyone thinks their school is unique and special.

I would rather tell you some of the things we have put in place to try and change the outside perception of our district. We have worked to hire high-quality staff with a passion for content and a desire to build relationships with students. We have improved our curriculum and help our students become career and college ready. We have worked to help them be the best human beings they can be, to treat others with respect and to be respected. We have worked to provide a wide variety of courses, extracurricular activities, and clubs. We have modified our schedule to allow all students one class period a day with unlimited access to their classroom teachers. This allows for 1:1 instruction and reteaching. We have utilized programs to allow our students to be successful regardless of their post-secondary path. Students can earn college credit at nearby 2 or 4 year institutions, they can take part in dual enrollment programs that allow them to be full time PEHS students while taking part in a full time program at a tech school, they can enroll in work release or youth apprenticeship programs that allow them to work during the school day and explore possible career paths. We also offer an in house credit recovery and GEDO2 program that has worked to help students catch up or graduate with their peers if they have not been successful in a traditional school environment.

But none of this has changed the big issue. We are still losing students to open enrollment, despite our efforts we are unable to change our story. But is it really just our story, I want to leave you with some numbers. According to reports on the Department of Public Instruction website in the 2017-18 school year, 60,820 students did not attend their resident district via open enrollment, keep in mind this does not include, home school, voucher, or private school students. This led to 419,310,159 dollars changing hands from district to district. I am going to say that again, almost 61 thousand students and 420 million dollars.

As we all know here at PEASD we are open enrollment losers. But really, I would argue, the state of Wisconsin is the loser. We have more students not going to their neighborhood school than the resident enrollment of every major metropolitan school district in our state, with the exception of Milwaukee Public Schools. We have created a culture of winners and losers and the commodity we trade in is our students. My challenge is, fix it. Put the community support back in schools. If you want to live in a community you should be willing to support it, eat in the restaurants, buy gas at the gas station and send your kids to the neighborhood schools. Thank you.

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My husband and I moved to Eagle 22 years ago and had 2 children who went through the Palmyra Eagle School system and are doing very well. My daughter was one of the valedictorians of her class with a 4.0 GPA, while being active in NHS, softball, yearbook and working a part time job. She is now a junior at UW-Whitewater and has maintained that 4.0 GPA throughout her college career. She is studying to be an elementary teacher and I believe that is in part because of the wonderful teachers she had while attending Eagle Elementary and Palmyra Eagle Middle and High School. My son graduated this past year and is a Freshman at UW-Whitewater. While at Palmyra Eagle he was able to participate in multiple sports throughout middle and high school. Most years he was a 3-sport athlete, so we spent many, many nights at ball games with a lot of the same parents and we became family – no Palmyra or Eagle – we are Palmyra Eagle!

I would like to address something I read in one of the Milwaukee Journal articles: A gentleman was quoted by a reporter at the polls as saying, “everybody out here wants to go to Mukwonago anyway”.

To that I say – NOT TRUE! As you can see from your meeting last Thursday and tonight, there are many people who still want their children to go to Palmyra-Eagle.

Unfortunately, a lot of the voters in Eagle who voted against the referendum without knowing all the facts listened to the Anti-Palmyra-Eagle group who was handing out flyers with all kinds of misleading information and claiming everything on them was a FACT. Again, NOT TRUE! Most of what was on those flyers were conjecture and opinion.

I no longer have children in the school district, but my family and I still care about this district.

- When we purchased our home in Eagle, it was with the understanding that we were in the Palmyra-Eagle School District. Our children would go to elementary school in Eagle and then to Palmyra for middle & high school. That was our choice. We wanted our children to go to a smaller school. We are very happy with our choice. If our district is dissolved that will be taking away all the other homeowners that purchased their home in this school district for a reason.
- Those who do not wish to send their children to Palmyra Eagle have the school choice option to enroll their children in any school district in the area. That is their choice and they have the right to do what's best for their children. That is what we are doing as well. If you want your tax dollars to go to the school district of your choice, then buy a house in that school district. Don't move into the one next door, where you can get a better house for less money, and then try to destroy that school district! Why should our small school suffer for that?? That is not right!
- Did the district not budget correctly, did they mishandle funds, did they not cut enough, etc.? I don't know, but I do know that in the April 2019 elections, 59 school referendums were being voted on! Our school district is not alone.
- Palmyra Eagle has the misfortune of being within 10 miles of a much larger school district and we are continually being compared to them. You are comparing apples to oranges. Of course, a school that large is going to have more academic and athletic options available than the small,

rural schools. That doesn't make them better; it just makes them different. And again, everyone here has the choice as to which school they send their children.

- Contrary to what some may want you to believe, We ARE NOT a failing school district! In fact, in the most recent DPI Report Card our district is Exceeding Expectations, the same category as Mukwonago Schools. We have good schools, teachers & programs despite what the opponents of the referendum would like everyone to think! In fact, our students are able to participate in multiple sports and activities at the same time. They can play football and run cross country in the fall and then play baseball and be on the golf or track team in the spring. They can also be on the dance team, band or chorus. If you come to one of our football games, you will see the band on the field at halftime; many of them in their football or dance team uniforms! That is not the case in a larger school. We don't have to cut anyone from anything, so everyone can participate and be part of the team. We may not have the number of sports and extra curricular activities that the large school districts offer, but what we do have is available to everyone and I believe this makes our children very well-rounded individuals. There are too many individual success stories to list, but I can tell you that our children are taught well, have many sports & extra curricular activities to choose from, are well prepared for college, and go on to be very successful.

Please consider:

1. There is so much more involved than just a few school buildings!
 - a. Our communities will lose
 - i. Volunteers – our students, coaches and teachers volunteer at many events within the community. For example, if you go to kettle moraine days you will see booths being manned by students and parents along with many coaches and teachers. These volunteer hours will be in another town now.
 - ii. Revenue from students/parents/teachers/coaches eating & shopping in their community - I know that my family and I often would eat at a restaurant in Palmyra after my kid's ball games or concerts along with many other families and visiting teams. People get gas and other things at the BP or Citgo in town on their way to or from school or a game. These small businesses depend on the school community for their livelihood. Many of these businesses have helped the school district by sponsoring events, building ball fields, donating to our Project Graduation, etc. Now all that revenue will be spent in another town.
 - iii. Property values - who will want to buy a home in our community? There has been a group of families that have, for one reason or another decided that the Palmyra Eagle School District wronged them or their children and have been on a smear campaign for years. If I'm someone watching this from the outside, I'm not going to want to move into a community that is in such conflict.
 - iv. We're being told our property value will be higher if we are in this "more desirable" school district. Okay, if that is the case doesn't that mean that our taxes will be higher? The fact is, there is NO WAY to know how our taxes are going to be affected if our district closes. Once that happens, it is out of our control. We have no say as to which district we will be put so you can't tell me what my taxes are going to be. You can look at mill rates, property values in one town compared to the other, and all that stuff, but no one knows what affect adding all these students into another district is going to have. Do all these other

schools just have unlimited room for more students? You can't tell me that these other school districts will never have a referendum in the future.

- v. And the number 1 ramification, the number 1 reason I'm standing up here is the STUDENTS! They have done ABSOLUTELY NOTHING to deserve this! They have done what is expected of them, go to school and do your best. We teach them things like the Eagle Way, Panther Pride, Palmyra-Eagle Together, etc. I have seen them fight for their schools by going door to door handing out flyers, getting petitions signed, marching in parades and to the capital. Now our community is going to say, too bad, forget all that, you don't matter. Our wants and needs are more important. They have to sit and listen to all these terrible things being said about their school, and therefore about them. Trust me, they take this personally. My 2 Palmyra Eagle graduates are taking it personally! When they see their school described as failing and less desirable! That hurts!
- vi. Do you think these other larger schools are just going to accept our children with open arms? Are they going to be welcomed onto the sports teams that have all been together for many years prior? Are the teachers going to know any of them? Are they going to be able to go back to a basketball game after they graduate and know almost everyone in the gym and be hugged and welcomed by teachers, asking how they are doing in college? I believe the answer is NO. If this district dissolves it is going to hurt so many kids and for some it will change their lives as they know it.

I used to be proud to say I lived in Eagle when people would ask me. Now, not so much. Now when someone asks where I live, I brace myself for the inevitable response of, "oh, that's the place where the schools are going to be closed"! And then I have to tell them that most of what they have heard about our school district is not true.

Please ask yourselves what type of precedent this will set? If we are going to start dissolving smaller districts, then what is to stop other groups and large school districts from coming in and taking over smaller districts in the future? This could be the end of the small school district as we know it and that would be very sad. BIGGER ISN'T ALWAYS BETTER!

I apologize for being long winded, but this is a very emotional issue for me and my community. Although I don't have children in the schools any longer, I still wonder what will happen to these children, friends and our community if there is no school here? So, Please, I BEG YOU, don't dissolve our school district!

Thank You for Your Time.

Sincerely,

Michele Tomfohrde

Sara Rivers

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In all of my years of teaching, I have never been in a school as amazing as this. The community I have found here is one that other districts I've worked in have only dreamed about, attempted to get and failed, sometimes miserably.

I teach special education and work with the most significantly disabled students. My students have IEP's - Individual Educational Plans. These are the plan or blueprint of what we will be focusing on for the next year in hopes to gain improvements. The team members on the IEP team may include the Special Education teacher, Regular education teacher, Speech and Language therapist, Occupational Therapist, Physical Therapist, Vision Therapist, Nursing and Psychologist along with the LEA (Local Educational Agency representative) and most importantly, the parents and students are included on the team. There may also be outside agencies - Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, County or state Case Workers, Ausitm Specialists or Advocates - to name a few.

The IEP's themselves include educational goals, speech and language goals, occupational and physical therapy goals and in some cases vision goals. For those over 14, they include transition goals - how will the student transition into adulthood (being as prepared as possible to

be well adjusted and as independent as possible). There is a section that addresses the supports and services the student needs to be successful in the school setting - extended time on tests, or items being read aloud so the student understands. The student may need sensory breaks to be able to return to the educational setting. They may need bussing, toileting assistance, feeding or supports with social or physical issues. All of this and more are discussed in the yearly IEP meetings.

Every 3 years, we do indepth testing to assess the student - have they grown, is the disability determination from 3 years ago still accurate. Have any new medical issues arisen. Are there new services needed?

My students all have IEP's . I have some students who have 10 or more members on their teams. We talk frequently, discussing the triumphs and discussing how we can adapt, change or approach a problem differently to help our students gain success.

I am sharing this to give a litte background of what happens in my world.

If this school dissolves and becomes part of another district, my current students live in Palmyra and would go to the same “new to them” school.

My biggest concern about my kids next year is going to a different school. They would be entering a classroom full of existing students. The staff in that existing classroom will need even more time to learn about our students and their needs. There will be teachers, therapists, nursing, and a student body that knows nothing about our kids other than what they read in an IEP. It's one thing to have an established classroom and get one new student. It's a wholly different issue when you have an existing classroom and get multiple new students. Even if the new district hires a new teacher to accommodate all of the new students, that new teacher is still learning the ins and outs of the new district and school he/she is in, figuring out who everyone on the team is and attempting to build trust with the students and parents and helping our kids through this traumatic event we have all gone through with the closing of the school. We could spend the next 6 months writing the IEP, attempting to get all of the information into it and never be able to share everything.

How can we share with another school, with that new team of 10-12 people, everything we've learned about the

students in the past years. We know how to motivate a student to come to school when he is allowed to stay at home when he wants, we can understand what a student is trying to say when it sounds unintelligible to others. With our medically fragile kids, we know what to look for when they are struggling and we need to take action, we have developed strategies and consistent processes in everything because we have worked together - how do we share that in just one document.

Because we are a small school district, our therapists work in the entire district. They have worked with my students from elementary school through graduation.

My students are making gains - every parent, therapist, regular ed teachers and administrator has said so. The gains we've worked so hard to make will be negated by not only new teachers and therapists, but longer bus rides (for medically fragile kids, this could be truly dangerous), new environments, new schedules, new student body, and in some cases, new outside agencies as they will now be attending school in a different county.

Bussing is another issue, especially with my medically fragile kids - currently, they are on the bus for 5 - 10 minutes. No matter where they go, that would not be

attainable. A 20-30 minute bus ride could be dangerous for the medically fragile students and will cause them to miss more school.

One other thing to think about - most schools refuse to take special education students with open enrollment. Some of our students' parents tried to open enroll their children to surrounding schools and their requests were denied. If the schools didn't want them during open-enrollment, how is it going to be any better when the DPI board sends them anyway? I personally feel that open enrollment discriminates against students with disabilities.

How will dissolution affect my students educationally? I believe it would impact them drastically, and in some cases it could be devastating. They could lose years of gains by this huge change.