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Date: Thu, May 5, 2022 at 9:43 PM  
Subject: Concerns about the District  
To: csharkey@hbschools.org <csharkey@hbschools.org>  
CC: jenningsj@hbschools.org <jenningsj@hbschools.org>

Dear Members of the High Bridge Board of Education,

My name is Nicole Cahill. I am a High Bridge taxpayer, parent of 3 former High Bridge students and have been the Elementary School Nurse for the past 15 years. I would like to express my concern regarding the recent retirements and resignations and how those positions are being filled. Most significantly the decision to change the position of the Middle School Nurse to part-time, which goes against objectives in the budget presentation which stated that the budget “maintains programs” and “supports current wellness and safety needs”. As seen in the past, when there is no nurse in the building, non-medical professionals end up assessing and treating students inappropriately, which not only causes a major liability to the district but puts the health and safety of students and staff at risk. Luckily, when this was done in the past, the issues that arose were not life threatening, the administration realized that the risks outweighed the financial benefits, and the position was returned to full time. The difference now is that there are more students with significant medical issues in both schools and laws have been passed increasing the responsibility of school districts to provide care to prevent life threatening medical emergencies. The increasing number of preschool students, as well as COVID, have placed greater demands on my time, leaving me even less available to leave to cover needs of another school on a daily basis. Emergency medical situations can happen at any time. They don't wait for a part time nurse to come on duty, and they don't wait for another nurse to get there from another building. The longer it takes to provide proper medical care increases the chances of severe and even life-threatening consequences.

When my children first started in High Bridge, one of the things that impressed me the most as a parent was the ratio of adults to students in the classroom, which allowed teachers to provide the individualized attention needed for young children. I was grateful for the trust and caring relationships my children had (and still have) with staff members who were there year after year. I watched as the district cut administrative positions in order to maintain those positions that directly impacted the education of the students. Unfortunately, that has not been the case for several years, and as not only a member of this staff but a member of the I & RS team, I have seen the consequences of this change for the students and fear that many other outstanding staff members will be lost to resignation or early retirement. In light of the recent retirement of the longtime Director of Special Services, I am concerned that this full-time position will also be cut to part time as so many others have. With the number of special education students in the district, the many laws and guidelines that must be followed for them, as well as the significant financial and educational benefits that the expanding preschool program (which was started and run by the Director of Special Services) provides, attempting to have anything but a full time professional dedicated to this time consuming and overwhelmingly important job, would be a great disservice to the families of High Bridge, not to mention again placing an increased liability on the district and risking the loss of significant funding and programs.

We have seen a part time nurse situation fail. We have seen the district run without the need for a vice-principal position, but yet the position was recreated and allowed the workload of 2 to be divided among 3 without dividing the pay. That in turn has caused many other non-administration positions to be cut, leaving the remaining staff to take on more of a workload without compensation. How is that a fair and reasonable use of taxpayer money? I realize that budget cuts make difficult decisions necessary, but do we really want the district moving backward instead of forward.

I thank you for your time in reviewing my concerns and most importantly for your dedication to the High Bridge School District.

Respectfully,

Nicole Cahill  
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High Bridge, NJ