

## Members of Fresno County Committee on School District Organization:

Thank you to the Sierra Unified school district for agreeing to meet tonight and hear the concerns and experiences of the parents who reside in Ventana Hills. My name is Rachel Donaldson, MD, and Tyler Arrigoni and I are the proud parents of Rowan Arrigoni, who looks forward to enrolling in Kindergarten during the 2027-2028 school year. Rowan was our surprise boy; we did not plan on having a child at our level of maturity, but he has been our greatest blessing. Our entire lives are now built around him. Like almost every other parent in our neighborhood, we plan on finding some way to enroll him in schooling in North Fresno/ North Clovis, even if he must go to private school.

I am a full-time pulmonary critical care physician and a member of the Permanente Medical Group. I work at Kaiser Hospital at the corner of Fresno and Alluvial Streets in Fresno. I take Rowan to the Woodward Park KinderCare every morning on my way to work and pick him up on the way home. Rowan will enroll in Brighten Academy near Kaiser Hospital later this fall. Like most of my neighbors, I find it burdensome to the point of prohibitive to commit to driving north to take my son to school and turn around to start the 40-minute trek south past my home to get to work each day. If Rowan has afterschool activities or needs to be picked up from school, it will take me 45 min from work (one way) to reach him in mid-day traffic. Once he goes to high school, the distance will increase to almost an hour one way. Extracurricular activities such as music, sports, and language lessons will require additional trips back to Fresno. Like me, Tyler commutes to Fresno daily. He is a software, electrical, and network engineer, and most of his contracts are in Fresno and Clovis. He commutes to Fresno City College and its surrounding campuses almost daily. Given our workloads, neither can make the commute up the hill work for our family. Commuting these distances will compromise an additional 6-7 hours of precious family time weekly.

When I was growing up in a suburb of Atlanta, Georgia, in the 80s and 90s, all the children in my neighborhood went to the same schools from Kindergarten through high school. We had an identity and a strong sense of community. Our parents helped each other to get us all to school and after-school events. We stayed in each other's homes for the entire summer. Some of my neighbors are still my closest friends; they are now my family. In Ventana Hills, we are not afforded that sense of community support and identity because every single family has had to figure out individual plans to get their kids to school in Fresno. There are no two families who send their children to the same school. We have in common that most students do not go to Sierra Unified schools. We can't help each other. The children don't know each other very well. Having no permanent solution has created unpredictability and inconsistency for the children and families in our community. Keeping our neighborhood within the Sierra Unified School District robs our children and their parents of the sense of community and mutual support that we (and our parents) had.

As the child of a public school teacher who dedicated 35 years to teaching high school English, I have a deep appreciation for public education. Tyler also attended public schools in San Jose. I wish Rowan could follow in our footsteps and attend a school where he could work hard in academics alongside the neighborhood kids in Ventana Hills and even those in the neighboring community in Millerton New Town. We are not inclined towards private schools because they differ from what we know or identify with. Tyler's older children from his first marriage attended Clovis North, Granite Ridge, and Fugman, and that is the shared public school experience we wish for Rowan.

As professionals, I understand that you must weigh the financial and political consequences of making a district transfer, but please make these decisions putting the best interests of our children and our community first. Please make our children's experiences and opportunities the highest priority. Please consider the health, happiness, and community of the children in our neighborhood and allow us this territory transfer.

I thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

Rachel Donaldson, MD, Tyler Arrigoni, and Rowan Arrigoni