

Introduction:

Good Evening, My name is Lilly Bailey.

- I am a Junior at Prairie Ridge High School taking AP and dual credit courses
- I am also the PR Wolves' Drum Major in marching band and a member of our audition Wind Ensemble.

I am a product of both D47 band and D47's EC program. These programs were essential in helping guide me to where I am and where I am going. I was not challenged on a daily basis in elementary school, but I was challenged and supported just enough by EC efforts to get to more advanced subject matter.

These early educational enrichments of band and EC provided me an environment where I was challenged more than in my mainstream classes, which afforded me the opportunity to struggle, persevere and grow, in not only academics but also in strengthening my resilience and confidence, skills that are essential in today's society, and that are certain to benefit me in my adult life. Band and high-ability classrooms are where I have always been allowed to stretch myself creatively and cognitively. It's where I've been the most frustrated and pushed, and also the happiest and most fulfilled. These early experiences allowed me to practice doing hard things, to make mistakes and try again, to make hard choices and have the confidence in myself to know that I am capable of it all.

I firmly believe that without these early opportunities and supports provided by my band and EC teachers, I would not be able to engage in such a rigorous course load as I am taking right now, and doors would already be closed for me in my pursuit of higher education and reaching my full potential.

I want these doors of opportunity to stay open for my little cousins too, who moved from surrounding towns just to have access to District 47's EC program. I want to see these programs and classrooms, and the students in them, fully supported by the leaders put in place to do just that. I wonder what will happen in a few years to enrollment numbers in the rigorous musical groups and high school courses I am taking if resources for advanced learning and enrichment are reduced in elementary school? Will my younger siblings and cousins not have access to them like I have? Are doors already starting to close for them?

There may not be loads of us gifted kids to consider, but we deserve your consideration and to have our special needs met, too. EC encourages us to think outside the box and ask deeper questions. Music teaches us to work together, to be part of a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. So I challenge everyone to embrace these teachings and pave a path forward that avoids reducing the already minimal early academic and enrichment support that sustains students like me and my peers. Students like my younger siblings and my cousins. And gets D47 back on track to truly and honestly empowering all students to learn and lead.

Thank you for your consideration.