

## Riley, Kate

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**From:** Kate McGovern <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 14, 2020 11:26 AM  
**To:** City Council; City Manager; Riley, Kate  
**Subject:** Tobin / VLUS expansion

Dear Mayor Siddiqui, Vice Mayor Mallon, City Councillors and City Manager:

I am writing in support of the Tobin School/VLUS expansion. Cambridge has a unique opportunity in this moment: to build a beautiful, net-zero school while also moving forward in our quest for universal preschool. This is a critical matter of equity in our city, and we should not turn away from it.

My daughter is nearly 3 and is currently on the waitlist for both the CPS and DHSP programs. Because of her birthday, she misses the JK cutoff by two weeks, leaving us with two years of preschool to account for. She won't benefit from the additional seats an expanded Tobin would provide. But I'm thinking about the families in my community whose lives could be changed by having greater access to free or affordable preschool choices. We know that high-quality early education is vital to a child's long-term academic success. We know that many children start their K-12 years already behind their peers and never get caught up—and high-quality ECE is a key piece of solving that problem. As a city, we have been discussing this issue for years. And yet we still have many families who are unable to access preschool opportunities for their own children, through the luck of their birthdays or lottery numbers. As I'm sure you know, private options in the area are simply out of reach for many families. The city has an extraordinary opportunity right now to move closer to equal educational access, and we should take it.

I can empathize with concerns about traffic (I have to tackle the Fresh Pond/Alewife every rush hour to get home!). But as with everything, we have to ask ourselves about our priorities. Is avoiding some additional congestion (during limited hours, and staggered during afternoon pickups) more important than giving our kids access to the educational opportunities they deserve and need? When we worry that "there will be too many children in this building," what does that mean for the families whose children we refuse to make room for? Of course, we must do all that we can to minimize the impact on the Tobin's neighbors, but the ultimate priority should be providing our children and families the opportunity for success. We talk often about an achievement gap in our public schools, but what we really have is an opportunity gap. It begins in preschool, and we have the chance to move toward closing it. Let's have the courage to do that, and ensure that all our children have access to a high-quality, affordable, early childhood experience.

Thank you for your time!

All best,

Kate McGovern  
[REDACTED]