

Dr. Kelly Kohls, Board President,
Mr. David Petroni,
Mr. Don Miller,
Mr. Jim Rigano,
Mrs. Wendy Kull
Springboro Community Schools
1685 South Main Street
Springboro, OH 45066

2 July 2013

Dear Members of the Springboro Community Schools Board of Education:

We are respectfully addressing you today as alumni of the Springboro Community Schools. As members of the educational community ourselves, we are frankly, incredibly concerned. More importantly, as young adults entering the age at which we might welcome children of our own—or, indeed, are already beginning families—we must say that we would not feel comfortable placing our children in your district.

We first formally request, for the Springboro taxpayers (many of us among them), the formation of a citizen advisory committee (as per Springboro Community Schools Bylaws & Policies §9140) and/or special town hall board meeting to specifically address community concerns regarding proposed additions to or changes in curriculum involving the influence of special interest organizations such as the Institute for the Constitution, and the district's relationship with its teachers and staff.

We thought originally that we might address the glaring legal and political issues implicit in your decisions, but many fantastic legal and critical arguments have already been made—by individuals and organizations such as the ACLU—and largely ignored. Additionally, this is more than a political issue. While it is our opinion that recent board decisions, policies, and publicity regarding our teachers and our curriculum are inexcusable in themselves, we feel that these problems are symptomatic of a much deeper representational concern. We are concerned that you have subordinated the needs of your students and community to the partisan desires of individual board members.

Your actions have had the startling effect of creating a united community Springboro has perhaps never seen before. Listen to that unity. Remember that you work for the community—not the other way around. It is the teacher's job to educate and select material through your partnership. Your job is to facilitate that education and the bond among school, population, and state, not to serve your special interests. You are not elected to force your own opinions. Your offices exist—as do all public positions—to represent the needs of your constituents. That is the meaning of democracy. The needs of our students are not served by your choices. Neither are the wishes of our parents. And your decisions—and the way in which you have made and defended several of them—reflect poorly on all of us, from the youngest preschooler to the oldest citizen.

There have been issues with our school board in the past, but our contemporary disputes are especially important for two reasons: the unprecedented community response, and the media attention. The district has been in the national spotlight for years. We have long been recognized for our successes—not just academic and athletic renown, but phenomenal faculty and the values of hard work, intellectual curiosity, and community strength our schools have historically engendered. As a few examples, we have consistently carried an abnormally high number of National Merit finalists, earned millions of dollars in scholarship with each graduating class, and led the nation in public education in a variety of surveys and studies.

We have moved from national to international recognition (we assume you, as well, are familiar with *The Huffington Post*). Our renown has skyrocketed, but not for the reasons listed above. While you may not find this recent celebrity embarrassing, we do, as much of the community does. Springboro is no longer a national paragon. We are an *international* laughingstock. Your decisions eclipse the things for which Springboro, only a few short years ago, was revered and proud. The board has moved beyond betraying our teachers, forgetting our children, and disrespecting our parents. You have offended and, worse, *implicated* the entire community.

Teachers and administrators we grew to respect and love—not only phenomenal instructors, but moral compasses, models of behavior—have been disrespected and forced out. Educators are leaving in droves, which raises a scarlet warning flag for other talented teachers on the job market. Certain members of the community have already moved away because they fear what we all do: that as more teachers leave, and as our reputation tarnishes, fewer people will move here, less business will follow, *more* people will move. A slippery slope it might be, but an uncomfortably *present* one.

Despite the protests of your constituents, you continue to ignore constructive and legal criticism of proposed policies and agendas at board meetings and through electronic communication. These protests come from people who are not only neighbors and friends, but people who pay you, who expect you to make decisions that reflect contemporary educational standards and the community's values and cares. The individuals who attend your board meetings have felt themselves consistently disrespected and ignored. The point of allowing the community to speak is so that you might hear it and *represent* it, not dictate illegal policies to it.

The intention of this letter is to demonstrate that a significant portion of the alumni population does not support recent decisions by the school board. Constructive legal arguments have already been made by others and subsequently ignored. We are not making policy recommendations. We are not demanding resignations. What we demand is that the board please respect and integrate the wishes of its constituency, and act within the law. What we request is the greater inclusion of the community in school policy and curriculum through the formation of a citizen advisory committee or organization of a special board meeting in which these topics may explicitly be addressed. We aim to illustrate, above all, the dissatisfaction of many of Springboro's graduates.

We believe that you do what you legitimately think is right—but from neither an educational nor a community perspective. We understand also that you are not required to grant our requests—but remember that election season quickly approaches, and one way or another these issues will

be solved democratically. **We encourage you to hear your community, change your policy, and prove us wrong.**

The publicity of several recent and illegal decisions has obscured our district's achievements, our teachers' talents, and our students' accomplishments—everything that makes Springboro *Springboro*. We would like to be able to list our alma mater at the head of our resumes, like many alumni before us, without being read as fanatical or flippant toward community, citizenship, and, most importantly, education and the future of our children. We urge you to listen to your neighbors and your friends. We encourage you to heed the words not only of alumni, but of fellow educators and Springboro citizens. And remember, above all, that *we* came from this school, and we will do what we can to protect it.

Respectfully yours, alumni of the Springboro Community Schools,

Lainie Chrisman (Class of 2008)
Alexander Menrisky (Class of 2008)

Signed IN SUPPORT, nearly 100 Springboro alumni, over thirteen years. Some remain in the community, some have moved away; some were National Merit finalists, others class presidents; some are Republican, some Democrat; some do not necessarily agree with this letter in its totality, some believe it too conservative. But all believe the board has not remained true to its promise to recognize “the value to school governance of resident and employee comment on educational issues and the importance of encouraging members . . . to express themselves on school matters of community interest” (§0169.1):

Cayla Adams (Class of 2006)
Allison Wilbert Affourtit (Class of 2008)
Michael Affourtit (Class of 2004)
Daniel Albrektson (Class of 2004)
Larry Back (Class of 2004)
Shawn Becker (Class of 2005)
Taylor Benjamin (Class of 2012)
Shelby Campbell Blankenship (Class of 2008)
Jennifer Blue (Class of 2008)
Sarah Blue (Class of 2008)
Alix Morrison Case (Class of 2007)
Maria Cassidy (Class of 2008)
Morgan Cassidy (Class of 2005)
Colin Celek (Class of 2008)
Kyle Chown (Class of 2012)
Katie Chrisman (Class of 2012)
Jake Crosen (Class of 2012)
Samantha Daigle (Class of 2012)
Justin DeCamp (Class of 2012)
Justin Donohue (Class of 2005)

Annye Driscoll (Class of 2008)
Heather Edgar (Class of 2007)
Mallory Fowler (Class of 2012)
Melissa Fowler (Class of 2011)
Briahna Gantt (Class of 2010)
Grace Geisler (Class of 2010)
Megan Graber (Class of 2012)
Will Graham (Class of 2013)
Meredith Greene (Class of 2013)
Garrett Grigsby (Class of 2012)
Ashlie Finnie Hague
Allie Hammons (Class of 2013)
Katie Harwood (Class of 2011)
David Hawk (Class of 2012)
Jonathan Head (Class of 2008)
Allyson Hobe (Class of 2007)
Nick Holland (Class of 2011)
Adam Honious (Class of 2012)
Zachary Horning (Class of 2012)
Nick Hunter (Class of 2008)
Brittany Johnson (Class of 2005)
Katie Kalbacher (Class of 2008)
Maria Kallas (Class of 2013)
Laurel Kincaid (Class of 2006)
Kyle King (Class of 2011)
Patrick Kinnunen (Class of 2012)
Saleada Kirk (Class of 2006)
Sylvia Klare (Class of 2008)
Kathryn Klens (Class of 2012)
Jordan Knecht (Class of 2010)
Luke Knecht (Class of 2006)
Anne Koppen (Class of 2008)
Amanda Koslow (Class of 2011)
Andrew Koslow (Class President, 2008)
Amanda Lamb (Class of 2008)
Jennifer Lee (Class of 2001)
Kellie Leis (Class of 2006)
Cooper March (Class of 2013)
Elizabeth Martino (Class of 2008)
Cate Bevis Masters (Class of 2007)
Alayna Mielke (Class of 2008)
Aaron Miller (Class of 2008)
Morgan Miller (Class of 2011)
Michael Mitter (Class of 2009)
Scott Munch (Class of 2012)
Laura Musselman (Class of 2007)

Elizabeth Norris
Rob Norris (Class of 2011)
Candace Ornduff (Class of 2005)
Vikram Rao (Class President, 2006)
Megan Reifenberg (Class of 2008)
Sajin Reza (Class of 2006)
Danielle Roark (Class of 2008)
Lindsey Rosendale (Class of 2012)
Andrew Schriml (Class of 2012)
Alex Serle (Class of 2007)
Cydney Shepard (Class of 2008)
Bret Sibert (Class of 2011)
Conner Smallwood (Class of 2008)
Michael Smith (Class of 2011)
Hannah Stanton-Gockel (Class of 2008)
Shelby Stevens (Class of 2005)
Joe Straub (Class of 2007)
Jennifer Strimpfel (Class of 2006)
Stephanie Suhr (Class of 2011)
Alec Tumblison (Class of 2012)
Anna Ulrich (Class of 2013)
Kirsten Ulrich (Class of 2008)
Jared Warncke (Class of 2007)
Evan Weiss (Class of 2005)
Sarah Weiss (Class of 2010)
Jonathan White (Class of 2007)
Leslie Wiederhold (Class of 2009)
Stephanie Wiederhold (Class of 2009)
Amanda Zeigler (Class of 2012)

Any individuals who wish to sign in continued support can do so at
<http://www.change.org/petitions/members-of-the-springboro-community-schools-board-of-education-hear-your-community-change-your-policy-and-prove-us-wrong>.