I am writing this letter both as a real estate agent and parent living in Caledonia.  I believe both offer insight as to why a change in the law to allow Caledonia to pursue an independent school district is a vital change.

As a real estate agent, I do not make statements to potential buyers and sellers regarding local school districts.  What I do see is with virtually every listing in west Racine County, the FIRST item listed and promoted is a “great school district!”  It’s a key factor in home buying.  What I do hear are buyers telling me they will NOT consider home buying within specific districts or school boundaries.  Virtually every week, I get calls regarding selling homes in the Racine/Caledonia area to pursue a home purchase out of the RUSD district, SPECIFICALLY as their children meet school or middle school age.  Home owners within Caledonia thinking about selling have told me they feel they are at a disadvantage in terms of selling their home for a competitive price in a reasonable time because of the school district.  As an agent, I am required to list the school district within my MLS advertisement.  Buyers can now search by district-specific listings.  Strong school districts are key factors in pursuing new construction and attracting business.  They are the foundation of a strong housing market with a community.  Caledonia deserves a voice in pursuing their own school district.  We are poised for a chance to grow in development and the course of that development is DIRECTLY impacted by what we can offer in terms of education.  It is time this community be allowed to be the ones determining our own vision.

As a parent and resident,  I love Caledonia.  I have fought hard to preserve what I cherish in this community.  With our unique atmosphere and vested residents, our potential is almost limitless.  I say “almost”, because the roadblock to that potential is the school district.  My 2 children attend schools through open enrollment.  My research and the needs of my children led me to this choice.  A sacrifice of time and cost is nothing when it comes to my kids.  They attend 2 different schools that takes up over 2 ½ hrs. every day in commuting.  RUSD could not offer the small class sizes I sought (10 and 15 kids per class at my kid’s schools).  I was concerned about my son with autism and the level of attention/assistance he would receive.  I worried about his safety as he attended Red Apple for 2 years and I saw overcrowding, behavior issues which were affecting his ability to learn.  We have been out of the district for 5 yrs. for my older son, 2 yrs. for my younger son.  EVERY SINGLE YEAR I meet parents I know from Caledonia who are now commuting via open enrollment, but MANY are simply moving.  I can name over 7 families in the last 3 yrs. alone.  It’s the same story over and over.  These families LOVE Caledonia, but they REFUSE to sacrifices their children’s education by staying in the community.  I find myself at that crossroad as well.

It seems to me the fundamental issue is that a community like Caledonia deserves the basic right to have the ability to pursue a school district if supported by the residents.  As the law stands now, we are not even given that chance.  I know the pride that comes when you feel like you have a voice in your community.  Give Caledonia that pride.  Let it be OUR voice that decides if we want an independents school district.

Sincerely,

Katie Tiderman

4519 N Green Bay Rd

Racine, WI

53404