Written Testimony for the Nov. 13 Boundary Hearing

Good evening, Dr. Smith and Members of the Board of Education.

My name is Audrey Boettcher, and I am a teacher at Quince Orchard High School. Thank you Dr. Smith for coming to see me teach the Great Gatsby! But I’m here tonight as a parent and member of the Germantown Elementary School PTA.

I want to persuade you to reject Dr. Smith’s recommendation to split the students from Germantown Elementary School between two high schools. Dr. Smith made this recommendation based on Germantown’s proximity to both high schools and recommended that students in our northern neighborhoods walk to Seneca Valley and students in our southern neighborhoods walk to Northwest, saving the school system money in transportation costs. The trouble with this recommendation is that it rips our school community in two.

Splitting our school in means splitting our community. It is HARD to rally working parents to volunteer at their child’s school, but the support network that parents build starting in elementary school makes their volunteerism sustainable. Our PTA moms and dads articulate to their middle school PTA and High School PTA with their kids, and those PTAs need us as a strong community. Last month Seneca Valley’s PTSA tweeted that they might not be able to host an After-Prom Party because of lack of parent volunteers. We ask that you keep our community together by keeping GES together, and we will fundraise, and sell spirit wear and run the concessions at the football game. And we’ll be there to chaperone the After-Prom Party too!

But even more importantly, we would ask you to consider the needs of our students in your decision. Germantown is a tiny close-knit school of only 321 students. The teachers foster students’ closeness and teach them to rely on one another as learners. Katie taught Schuyler how to multiply fractions. Allyson taught Katie how to knit. Schuyler got the whole group reading Greek Mythology.

The support among students at GES reminds me of what the Posse Foundation created at the college level 30 years ago when a college drop out said, “I never would’ve dropped out of college if I’d had my posse with me.” Since then, the Posse Foundation have grown leaders by sending urban students to the nation’s top colleges as a posse so that could “back each other up.” And Posse Scholars graduate at a rate of 90 percent.

Splitting our school would mean splitting this posse. And their support for one another is worth the extra transportation cost. Don’t split this posse. Don’t split GES.