

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee, and Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee

My name is Jamie Toohey, and I am the Principal at Paris Elementary School, serving 430 PreK-6 students from the rural communities of Paris and West Paris within the Oxford Hills School District. I am also the proud mother of two teenage sons, a 10th grader at Oxford Hills Comprehensive High School and an 8th grader at Oxford Hills Middle School.

I'm testifying today as both an administrator and a mother. As a principal, I've seen how BARR has transformed Paris Elementary—how we use data and relationships to ensure every student succeeds. As a mother, I've experienced the power of BARR with my own children and understand what's at risk when we don't have these structures in place.

I'll start with a little background. I was first introduced to BARR about 8 years ago when I was invited to our high school to observe how BARR meetings supported our 9th graders through their transition to high school. Since that time, BARR has expanded within our district to our middle school and 10th grade due to its positive impact on student outcomes. And just two years ago, with the generous funding from the State, BARR was implemented at Paris Elementary School.

But before I tell you more about our elementary implementation, let me share why I believed in BARR enough to bring it to my school.

During my oldest son's 8th grade year, I experienced the BARR model at work firsthand. My son's Health teacher noticed a recent disengagement in class and brought him up at a BARR meeting. Typically, my son would be one of those kids who fell through the cracks. He's quiet and doesn't like to stand out. But because BARR ensures we discuss every student, not just those with the highest needs, she was able to identify and implement a thoughtful intervention that worked. This changed the course of my son's 8th grade year, and this situation reiterated the power of BARR for me both personally and professionally. The BARR framework ensures that every student is noticed and connected, even when they don't think they want or need to be.

As an administrator, when State funding made it possible to bring BARR to Paris Elementary, I didn't hesitate to jump on board. I believed that if we could implement these structures at the elementary level starting in PreK, that our students would have support throughout their Oxford Hills careers. As we know, early intervention can prevent negative outcomes including chronic absenteeism, academic failure, and even dropout risk. To me, and thankfully to my superintendent, it made perfect sense.

At Paris Elementary, we intentionally started small, piloting at the 5th and 6th grade levels to build trust and momentum. The results spoke for themselves, so last year when it was time to decide whether to go school-wide, it was an easy decision.

On the ground, grade-level teams come together each week to talk about students using data they've collected. The focus is not just on students' test scores, but on the whole child. So when a kid is struggling, when something changes—like it did for my son—when absence patterns shift, teachers notice. And when the classroom interventions don't work, we escalate the conversation to the next structure and to the next, ensuring that the right people come to the table at the right time to create lasting change for students and families.

As leaders yourselves, you understand that real, transformational change requires time, intention, and sustained resources. The staff at Paris Elementary is fully committed to this work; however, without continued funding, BARR becomes just another half-baked, abandoned initiative. Cutting funding now doesn't just pull the rug out from under my teachers—it breaks their trust and tells them that their efforts don't matter. Ultimately, it's our students who will pay the price.

All of our kids deserve to be noticed and to know that they matter. And the deeply committed staff of Paris Elementary School deserve a chance to see this initiative through. I urge you not to let BARR become another underfunded promise and to commit continued funding for BARR so my school and so many others across the State can sustain this transformational work.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Jamie Toohey, Principal

Paris Elementary School