

Daniel McGinn

6 Armstrong Drive
Westborough, MA 01581

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To Whom It May Concern:

I have known Ilyse Kanji for ten years, since our oldest children started in kindergarten as classmates at Fales. Over the last decade she has impressed me as one of the most civic-minded, energetic, and committed leaders in Westborough—one whose work has benefitted the entire community due to growing recognition of our school system as among the top in Massachusetts.

I was impressed with Ilyse from the moment I met her. Although I had very little experience with special needs children prior to my own children entering school, I soon recognized—mostly from watching Ilyse—that being a good parent to a special needs child requires a unique mix of skills and a special emotional temperament. I watched Ilyse advocate for her son in a calm manner that always emphasized her respect for the school's personnel, its rules and procedures. I watched the ways Ilyse formed relationships with other parents to support her son's efforts to socialize. And I observed the way Ilyse immediately stepped up to volunteer her time, energy, and skills to make Fales a better place—a habit I would later learn is a hallmark of how Ilyse Kanji behaves in every sphere of her life.

In 2008, I received a call asking if I'd be interested in running for an open seat on the Westborough School Committee. I quickly demurred, and instead suggested Ilyse Kanji for the position. I wish every suggestion I made turned out as well as this one has. Over the last six years, Ilyse has provided leadership—first as a committee member, and more recently as chairperson—during an extremely difficult period. As reduced state funding and local concern over tax rates have turned the annual budgeting process into a tense and emotional debate, Ilyse has guided the committee and administration to make very hard choices (including staff layoffs, program cuts and fee increases) in a way that's thorough, professional, and caring. She's done so in the face of opposition that can be shockingly hostile. When attending school committee meetings and Town Meeting, I have been surprised by how nasty and personal the floor debates can be. I recognize that I would have a very difficult time controlling my emotions in responding to these situations, yet Ilyse always manages to keep the dialogue calm, professional, and focused on what's best for Westborough's children. It's important to note that one needn't rely on this letter alone for evidence of this—simply turn to the video archives of school committee meetings and Town Meetings on Westborough's cable television system, which contain many hours of footage showing Ilyse responding to angry or hostile speakers with the courtesy and grace that have marked her public life in Westborough.

Outside of her work on the School Committee, Ilyse is the parent every coach wants to have involved when picking a sports team. She steps up to organize car pools, creates volunteer schedules to bring Gatorade or rake fields or work at the snack shack—and when other people blow off their responsibility, Ilyse is the parent who quietly steps in, giving up the opportunity to watch her son play in order to pick up the slack for others. Ilyse is also especially attentive to concerns about safety, which makes her a great asset in youth sports; I always feel better when Ilyse is on hand, because it increases the odds that good decisions will be made, rules will be followed, and the situation will remain in control.

I continue to have the highest regard for Ilyse Kanji's character. I remain thankful for not only the time she invests in our community, but for the results she's producing—results from which every child and property owner in Westborough has benefitted. She has my admiration and my highest recommendation.

Sincerely,

