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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to voice my very strong support for supporting parent' rights to make decisions regarding their twins' classroom placement. This is a crucial issue, one that the Minnesota State Legislature has recently translated into law. Other states, including New York, Illinois and North Carolina, are also moving in this direction—recently, the Illinois state legislature has been listening to the voices of parents and other concerned individuals. Most of the work I will refer to is summarized in my recent book, *Entwined Lives: Twins and What They Tell Us About Human Behavior* (2000, NY: Plume), and references therein. You may also refer to my newest book, *Indivisible by Two: Lives of Extraordinary Twins* (2005, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press). Also see the *NY Times* piece, “To Keep Twins in Same Class, Parents Seek Legislators’ Help,” February 24, 2006, p. A1, 21 (Ginia Bellafonte).

My interest in twins' school separation began while I was at the University of Minnesota. I was a post-doctoral fellow in the Psychology Department for three years (1982-1985), working with the Minnesota Study of Twins Reared Apart, directed by Prof. Thomas J. Bouchard, Jr. Then, I served as Assistant Director of the Minnesota Center for Twin and Adoption Research for six years (1985-1991).

As a researcher of twins, I have been visiting twins and their families for about twenty-five years. I have done a great deal of research on twin relations. The twin bond, especially among identical twins, is unusually close—but this does not diminish each child's individuality in any way. It does mean that twins are more likely to feel comfortable and secure in a new situation, like school, when they are with their twin. They are also able to develop relationships apart from their twin sibling, despite being in the same classroom—teachers can place them in separate groups, giving them access to new pupils, but also allowing them opportunities to see their twin and to know that the twin is all right.

There is research showing that children entering school with friends are more likely to engage in activities and spend less time with teachers. Being with a friend dampens some of the difficulties in separating from the parent—so it seems blatantly unfair to ask twins to separate from their parents and from their twins.

I have written many letters on behalf of concerned parents who find schools insensitive to their twin children's desires to remain together. The policy of separation is based on an unfounded fear that twins will fail to develop “individuality”—whatever that means!! At the same time, I advise parents of identical twins to dress the children in different outfits

to help students and teachers to tell them apart. I also urge parents to work cooperatively with schools, to monitor situations and to be receptive to suggestions should they arise.

Note that Oklahoma has passed a resolution giving parents the right to decide their twin children's educational circumstances. Also see an excellent law review article, written by a mother of twins, in support of parents' right to decide (L.L. Dean, 1999, Stetson Law Review, Vol. XXIX, no. 2).

Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

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