



+ August 15, 2026

Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Ms. Bridget Rauvola
Chair, NDRCHS Steering Committee
Sacred Heart Parish Hall
1110 14th Street
Bellingham, WA 98225

Dear Ms. Rauvola,

Peace of our Lord be with you!

I am grateful to you and the entire Steering Committee for your efforts over the past several years. The feasibility study sought out to determine the need and support for a Catholic high school serving Island, San Juan, Skagit, and Whatcom Counties in the Archdiocese of Seattle.

I have studied the information provided through this process and have confidence in the pastoral leaders, Steering Committee members, and families across the Northern Deanery who have worked so faithfully to bring this vision forward.

After prayerful consideration of your application, I gladly approve the opening of the Northern Deanery Regional Catholic High School in the fall of 2027, welcoming its first ninth-grade class for the 2027-28 school year. This will be the first Catholic high school these four counties have known, and it is a joyful testament to the faith and generosity of the families and parishes who have made it possible.

As the school's first governing board is formed, I ask that this work continue to be done in close partnership with Nicholas Ford, Superintendent of Catholic Schools, and the Office for Catholic Schools, so that the board is well grounded from its first days in both its governance responsibilities and the mission it is called to sustain.

It is also my hope that the school's academic program will strive to welcome and support the full range of learners, including students with diverse learning needs who come to NDRCHS from our Catholic elementary schools, while also offering a rigorous,

college-preparatory experience, with learning support and differentiated instruction woven into the fabric of the school from its very first days.

Regarding the school's permanent name, I am grateful for the Steering Committee's recommendation of St. Kateri Tekakwitha and will continue to hold it in prayerful consideration. Before any final decision is made, I believe it is essential that we engage the Indigenous and tribal communities of the region in that discernment as their affirmation of a name honoring one of their own would itself be a gift to the school and a sign of the partnership we are committed to deepening with them. For the time being, the school is approved to proceed as the Northern Deanery Regional Catholic High School.

Please keep the Office for Catholic Schools informed as your good work continues. Thank you for your dedication to this vital ministry, and please know of my continued prayers for you, the Steering Committee, and all the families who will be served by this ministry. As always, I remain,

In The Heart of Christ,



Most Rev. Paul D. Etienne, DD, STL
Archbishop of Seattle

cc: Very Rev. Jeffrey H. Moore, Dean of the Northern Deanery
Dr. Andy Remien, NDRCHS Director of Implementation
Nicholas Ford, Superintendent of Catholic Schools