

February 2, 2016

Dear Senate Education Committee:

My name is Kevin Casillas, a resident of Lincoln Park, Michigan. I write today to voice my opposition to SB713, SB714, and SB715.

I currently serve as Pastor of First Latin American Baptist Church in Southwest Detroit, an Evangelical, bilingual congregation that has ministered in Detroit since 1930. I also teach at DPS' Cass Technical High School. Like many of my teacher colleagues, I work two jobs to try to provide for my family. I have a nine-month old and a three-year old.

In the past several years under Emergency Management of DPS, we have seen wages decrease, pay steps frozen, money "borrowed" from our wages, and increases in our costs of health insurance and other benefits. We have seen class sizes increase, mismanagement of programs and supplies, and conditions in buildings that have deteriorated to the point of making it unsafe and unhealthy for kids to go to some of the schools. The so-called "sick outs" by some of my colleagues were a cry for help, a cry to you after month of calls to our administration, calls to your offices, trips to Lansing, and calls to the governor. In any other sector of society, whistle blowers are protected, why are you choosing this day to discuss punishing them?

After years of control by State-appointed Emergency Managers and CEO's, DPS will once again run out of money in April. The teachers are not the ones to blame. We have made significant sacrifices as a part of the EM's schemes to balance the books. It is time to hold the EM's accountable. It is time to hold your EM laws accountable for the chaos they have left in DPS. It is time to resolve the debt and send the urgent funds needed for the education of students at DPS. Today's proposals are a colossal waste of time and expresses nothing but the worse Lansing has to offer.

As a Pastor I urge you to reflect on the fact that one day you will give an account for the choices you make or postpone because of special interests and appeasement of wealthy donors at the expense of the wellbeing of children in poorer communities. Consider the words of Proverbs 22:13, and Proverbs 22:16,22-23 and reject SB713, SB714, SB715:

“Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard. . .He that oppreseth the poor to increase his riches, and he that giveth to the rich, shall surely come to want . . . Rob not the poor, because he *is* poor: neither oppress the afflicted in the gate; for the LORD will plead their cause, and spoil the soul of those that spoiled them.”

Thank you,

Kevin Casillas

Lincoln Park, MI