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MAPSA Testimony Detroit Public Schools
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Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee,

I'm Dan Quisenberry, President of the Michigan Charter School Association, recent reports have portrayed me as "the powerful charter lobby", some kind of education outsider. I guess it's a compliment that they think of us as powerful, but I know that has nothing to do with me.

It's because we represent 150,000 students, their families, the schools that serve them and the supporters of education quality and choice around Michigan, the large majority of which are in the Detroit metro community. Throughout this process, parents have made their feelings known.

On Dec. 3, 500 charter school parents came to Lansing to make their voices heard. And what they said is that they don't want a bureaucracy making choices that they should be making themselves. The Detroit Education Commission is not local control, it's a new level of bureaucracy, stepping between parents, and schools.

In October, we released a scientific survey of Detroit parents and residents. 75% of them said they want more school choices, not less. Over 80% strongly oppose any plan that would limit or remove the independence of schools and tamper with their rights as parents.

STANDARDS There was agreement in the testimony you heard last Thursday. Set standards and enforce them. While not in these bills it is time for Michigan to establish a statewide accountability system, setting the standard, utilizing and A-F letter grading system, based on a new assessment strategy, with standards that will make sure all our kids are college and career ready.

Some would say the State isn't going to do this, so Detroit should do it on it's own. *That would be a big mistake.* Why should a family who chooses to send one child to a school outside of the city of Detroit, say in Harper Woods, or Madison Heights and a second child to a school inside the city have two sets of standards? Schools would face a patchwork of confusion and it would only add an additional layer to the already confusing accountability that the state currently uses.

CLOSING A new A-F accountability system, like we have proposed on multiple occasions over the last few legislative sessions, would appropriately flag schools that are underperforming.

- We suggest stopping schools that are F's (or in the bottom 5% of schools in the current system) from shopping for a new authorizer.
- Then use the SRO (existing authority), to intervene or close the worst of the worst. There are 27 schools in Detroit that have been in the bottom 5% for 3 consecutive years. Something needs to be done with these schools.

OPENING Reviewing actual new school opening data you can see that there have only been a net of 5 new schools over 6 years. This doesn't require a new bureaucracy. The Mayor already has facility control, and city influence of city government. Also, new information is being developed to fully inform everyone, on city demographics, school utilization, trends, performance, etc. Information drives behavior and will drive the need or not for a new school. All this can happen now it doesn't need a commission or a czar controlling it. A DEC, as has been proposed, even before the Coalition recommendations.

Saying the DEC *"won't run schools"* may be technically correct about the classroom, it will indeed run schools. IF one politically appointed commission, hires a czar and has control over:

- Judging quality,
- Picking who opens, and who closes,
- Approving growth, new classes or grades,
- Controls facilities,
- Develops the city plan,
- Controls enrollment,
- Controls student records,
- Possibly provides transportation,
- Possibly provides special education services,
- Possibly provides professional development or teacher recruiting.

Isn't that like a big, central district? Big central districts haven't worked anywhere in the country, and it won't work now in Detroit. Parents have left that idea behind over the last forty years. We should too.

Also, there is significant opposition to the Emergency Manager and the EAA. Why? Because it's a single political appointee with absolute power. Why are the same people proposing a new political appointee with absolute power? That doesn't make any sense.

The last point I have time to make is, to improve achievement it's important to see what is currently working and grow it. The Mayor and many others say there are some good charters, some bad. What it implies is wrong and it's too easy to say without evidence. If fact the Mayor's chart from last week, "some good, some bad", was filled with errors. After we pointed out mistakes they did make corrections. What they didn't tell you was that beyond the 18 charter schools that are underperforming, there are 45 DPS schools. Don't get me wrong, this performance is not acceptable, there should be interventions or closures.

As you can see in this chart, in every category charter schools in Detroit out perform DPS. Digging deeper, 26/30 top performing schools in Detroit in ELA & Math are charters. Standford University in comparing like schools in Detroit found that Detroit charters are producing an additional 3 months of education in Math and Reading per year.

I am outraged that too many people minimize the importance of these improvements, again don't miss understand, the performance is not where it needs to be, BUT, if you are a family trapped in a Detroit neighborhood, these differences are "the difference".

Universal Academy

Adel Nasser and his family live in S.W. Detroit. He will tell you that in 2009/10 when traditional schools were being closed, he and his wife considered moving out of the city, to make sure their children has a quality education. A neighbor suggested he check out a charter school, Universal Academy. He thought about it and decided they would try Universal. Just last spring

his oldest son graduated with a 4.0, and is now attending U of M Dearborn, with a full ride scholarship.

He is happy, his kids who are still attending Universal Academy are happy. They still live in their neighborhood in Detroit. He says the school is like family, a community, where parents can really be involved and engaged. When there are concerns, we solve them together, parents, teachers, the school.

Detroit Achievement Academy
Is a wonderful charter school in Detroit. Last week, Mayor Duggan mistakenly put this school on a list of charter schools that he said were "abysmal." It's not abysmal. Neither are several other schools he mistakenly put on the list, Univ. Prep Math & Science, and several other were data errors. OK, everybody makes mistakes. These issues require real understanding of education data to get the decisions right.

DAA is an elementary school, and even though it's only been open for a little more than two years, they're already seeing tremendous growth and progress. When the first-graders were tested after last school year, they discovered that they experienced an average of a year-and-a-half growth in reading. A year and a half of growth in just one year! That's remarkable.

In addition, Detroit Achievement Academy has a focus on agriculture and healthy eating. They give their students three meals a day, and they teach them healthy eating habits that will hopefully last a lifetime. They do all this in a building that is clean and well-kept, where the teachers show up to work every day, and like most of the charter schools in Detroit, it's a school that's run entirely by Detroiters. Talk about local control. You're getting local control at Detroit's charter schools.

This charter school and others are literally changing lives. And you know what? If there were a Detroit Education Commission, this school never would have been allowed to open. And if we have a DEC, it might be on the chopping block to close.

IN SUMMARY

This legislation is headed in the right direction, in addition we would suggest the following:

- Establish an A-F Accountability system, set expectations, then hold people accountable based on expectations.
- Resist establishing a DEC, a new means of centralized control of schools, it might feel good temporarily but won't work.
- Improve student outcomes. We need more autonomous schools, like charter schools, working for kids in Detroit, not fewer.