

TO: AAPS Board of Education Trustees

FROM: Christine Stead

DATE: December 5, 2012

SUBJECT: Resolution Regarding Education Legislation and Adequate Support of K12 Education

WHEREAS current legislative efforts in Lansing are being quickly written and rushed through the legislative process without proper public vetting and engagement with citizens and educational professionals for the apparent purpose of fulfilling a partisan agenda to privatize public education, and;

WHEREAS the effort to codify in the handful of days left in the 2012 lame duck session vast power to an entity and leadership (Mr. John Covington and the Education Achievement Authority) that has not been able to demonstrate any educational efficacy, either here or in the year spent in a 'reform' effort in the Kansas City Public Schools where there was a measured DECREASE in student achievement, is reckless and premature, and;

WHEREAS the rush to codify the EAA clearly bypasses basic common sense, evidence-based reasoning, and has been so poorly conceptualized that even the newly appointed EAA Chancellor does not appear to have a clear understanding of the provisions of HB 6004 and SB 1358, and;

WHEREAS a number of major flaws in the first edition of these bills, including one which would have prohibited the programs from receiving federal grants due to a complete lack of testing, will continue to be identified upon more careful scrutiny, and;

WHEREAS Republican legislators continue to carve a superhighway for for-profit companies to take over public education that have no quality standards, accountability or oversight by local elected officials, while simultaneously increasing standards, requirements and unfunded mandates on traditional public schools so as to destabilize them and 'break the unions', and;

WHEREAS the current and anticipated new bills (HB 6004, SB 1538, HB 5923 and its equivalent 'super voucher' bill, and the School Aid Act rewrite constructed by the conservative Oxford Foundation with no accepted input from education professionals) advance the privatization of public education with analysis of the impact of these bills on the 1.5 million current, and all future, children in Michigan who are most likely to suffer from these poorly conceived bills, and;

WHEREAS recent and expected fiscal policies continue to underfund and destabilize traditional education institutions, no matter how excellent or innovative, for the apparent purpose of giving businesses additional monumental tax breaks without replacing revenue for schools and local government, further eroding public education institutions, and;

WHEREAS the substantial school reform efforts of the past two years have never been properly evaluated or addressed for their own impact in a rush to pass new, massive reform bills whose impacts have alarmed educational professionals across the State, and;

WHEREAS those impacts include gutting the kind of robust educational experiences for students that are most apt to create high performing, critically thinking adults through arts, athletics and other frameworks that enhance the emotional and social development of children while suggesting that the cheaper option of children racing through academic requirements on a computer creates a somehow more optimal developmental outcome, and;

WHEREAS no due diligence has been done to make obvious the impact that these bills would have on traditional public education institutions in hopes that parents and families will be distracted enough by ‘innovation’ and ‘choice’ to not notice the likely annihilation of their local public schools and their ability to have a voice in how those schools are run by electing and participating in local governance – all of which ultimately reduce both choice and the quality of education available in communities, and;

WHEREAS duly elected state and local Boards of Education and their constituents have been entirely marginalized by the introduction of these bills, and;

WHEREAS Michigan continues to race to the bottom in the US with its relatively low student performance on the NAEP, which has dropped precipitously with the funding model introduced in Proposal A, allowing Michigan to spend much less on education for the past 18 years, and current legislators seem inclined to further reduce spending on education while hoping for improved education performance.

NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED:

The Ann Arbor Public Schools Board of Education

- Opposes all current efforts to destabilize, defund and deconstruct community-based and governed traditional public education, including HB 6004, SB 1358, HB 5923 the ‘Super Voucher Bill’ and the School Aid Act rewrite authored by the Oxford Foundation; and
- Opposes all efforts to allow for profit companies to take over public education in the state of Michigan that includes profiteering off of taxpayer dollars for the purpose of increasing shareholder value and redistributing our taxes to CEOs and shareholders instead of to our children’s education; and
- Opposes the defunding of public education in Michigan, which we believe is tied to the sustainability of our economy and our communities; and
- Opposes the expansion of authority of the EAA, which needs to first demonstrate that it can be successful before any additional authority is granted to it; and
- Opposes the state’s efforts to rid communities of the opportunity to participate in and govern their local schools; and
- Opposes the current legislation’s lack of due diligence on any of these bills and honest communication to parents and taxpayers on the long term impact that these bills would have for their traditional public schools; and
- Opposes efforts to expand charter, cyber, and hybrid options that often under-perform the traditional public schools, from which they are allowed to draw students, and;

- Opposes the current fiscal priorities of the state that continue to value prison over the classroom; and
- Opposes the current legislators’ notion of ‘choice’ that has more to do with profiteering and a partisan agenda than what is best for students; and
- Opposes the lack of local funding control so that communities might be able to break free from the state’s efforts to demolish public education; and
- Endorses laying a foundation of education as a top priority for improving the economy that is funded in a manner that reflects education as the state’s top priority; and
- Endorses and encourages innovation and programs that improve the educational foundation, experience and skills of our students; and
- Endorses a restructuring of the state’s school funding model that allows local levy authority; and
- Endorses and encourages locally-governed and delivered education that is accountable to the people in the community and reflects the high expectations and standards that we believe serve all of our students; and
- Endorses the level of funding that supports more robust programming and support to develop high performing adults, provides extra support for students that are struggling, and provides an experience that optimizes the social and emotional development of all students; and
- Endorses a vision of education in Michigan that is competitive for a global economy and attractive for local community members and others seeking an excellent public education; and
- Directs the Executive Assistant of the Ann Arbor Public Schools Board of Education to transmit copies of this resolution to:
 - Governor Rick Snyder
 - Senator Randy Richardville, Senate Majority Leader
 - Representative Jase Bolger, Speaker of the House
 - Senator Gretchen Whitmer, Senate Democratic leader
 - Representative Richard Hammel, Minority Leader of the House
 - Senator Rebekah Warren, 18th District
 - Representative Mark Ouimet, 52nd District
 - Representative Jeff Irwin, 53rd District
 - Representative David Rutledge, 54th District
 - Representative Rick Olson, 55th District
 - Representative-elect Adam Zemke
 - Representative-elect Gretchen Driskell
 - John Austin, President, State Board of Education and all members of the State Board of Education
 - Kathy Hayes, Executive Director, Michigan Association of School Boards
 - Larry Cobler, co-Chair, Washtenaw Alliance for Education
 - Scott Menzel, co-Chair, Washtenaw Alliance for Education and Superintendent, WISD
 - David Friese, Chair, Legislative Relations Network, WASB
 - Local print, voice, and internet media.