

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Coalition calls foul on inaccurate, misleading claims**

DETROIT – As Michigan gets closer to enacting meaningful reforms to improve education in its largest city, opposing special interest groups are clouding the air with false allegations and hyperbole about the function of the proposed Detroit Education Commission. And some journalists have printed the hearsay as fact, seemingly without having read the Return to Excellence legislation that passed through the Senate this week.

“I’ve been around education reform for a long time, but I have never seen this kind of ideological truth-bending on such an important issue,” said Rev. Wendell Anthony, Coalition co-chair, Fellowship Chapel and president of the Detroit branch of the NAACP. “We’re talking about the future of 100,000 children,” Rev. Anthony added. “I wish there were referees who could blow whistles on these types of flagrant fouls, and eject dirty players.”

**Allegation:** The DEC would have the authority to close schools.

**Actual:** The authority to close schools would remain under the State School Reform Office (SSRO).

**Allegation:** The DEC could ban new charter operators from opening schools.

**Actual:** The DEC is designed to make it easier for proven charter operators to enter Detroit and for existing high-performing schools to replicate. Also, any denial of opening can be appealed to the State Superintendent, who can overrule the DEC’s decision.

Behind this claim is the fear that the DEC would limit school choice. The facts are that Detroiters have more than 50 different school operators to choose from under 14 different authorizers – we have for-profits, nonprofits, districts ... there is no shortage of choice – but there is a clear shortage of quality. The DEC would ensure families have quality choice.

**Allegation:** Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan will stack the DEC deck by appointing only advocates of Detroit Public Schools.

**Actual:** The mayor would split the appointments evenly between the traditional public school and charter sectors, including having a parent from each sector serve on the Commission. Furthermore, soliciting community and stakeholder input is mandated for all DEC duties.

**Allegation:** The DEC’s performance is tied to DPS’ finances.

**Actual:** The DEC’s focus is academic outcomes. The Commission sunsets after 5 years unless the SSRO determines that it has improved education outcomes in all schools, traditional and

charter. Furthermore, the DEC must adopt, and operate according to, strong conflict of interest policies in accordance with state law.

“Special interest groups are trying to create fear that the DEC would limit choice,” said the Coalition’s Rev. Anthony. “In fact, it would do the opposite. We have choice and we will still have choice. What we don’t have in Detroit is quality choices. That’s what we’re fighting for.”

Added Coalition co-chair John Rakolta Jr., CEO of Walbridge: “The DEC will give taxpayers certainty that only quality schools with proven academic results can replicate. It will ensure a robust choice system that serves in the interest of Detroit schoolchildren, not for the bank accounts of a few bad actors.”

“Charters have always located on the border of Detroit and they will likely continue to do so,” said Coalition co-chair Angela Reyes, executive director of Detroit Hispanic Development Corporation. “The Coalition believes that it is on all of us to create quality charter school choices in the city so we can attract those students back. The newly announced Detroit Promise, we believe, could bring up to an additional 20,000 students back into city schools.”

*The Coalition for the Future of Detroit Schoolchildren formed on December 11, 2014 as an independent, diverse cross-section of Detroit leaders who came together to make recommendations to improve the city’s education system. Its first report, The Choice Is Ours, focused on how the state could help. Most of our recommendations were enacted. Now, the Coalition is focused on actions Detroiters can take locally to strengthen the city’s schools.*

*The Coalition’s leadership teams are made up of approximately 150 community members. The Coalition is led by six co-chairs: Tonya Allen, Skillman Foundation president & CEO; Rev. Wendell Anthony, Fellowship Chapel and president of the Detroit branch of the NAACP; David Hecker, president of AFT Michigan/AFL-CIO; John Rakolta Jr., CEO of Walbridge; Mark Reuss, executive vice president, global product development, purchasing and supply chain of General Motors; and Angela Reyes, executive director of Detroit Hispanic Development Corporation.*

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