

Coalition for the Future  
of Detroit Schoolchildren

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Letter from Detroit student, Imani Harris**

DETROIT – My name is Imani Harris. I am a very concerned sophomore at Renaissance High School.

I am writing this letter because I am appalled. I am appalled at the fact that there was ever a thought that already struggling teachers should work for free while our emergency manager, legislatures, etc. continue to be paid.

I am appalled that teachers had to resort to striking because they were not taken seriously with just their words. I am appalled that teachers were then shamed for standing out. Is it not their First Amendment right to protest peacefully?

I am appalled that adults that have never been to nor had children in a Detroit Public School would dare tell teachers that they are wrong, while they sit at home and receive their paychecks. I am appalled that it took two days of me being at home for there to be some “solution.”

I am dumbfounded at the fact that Senate Bill 710 and 711 were rejected, and then changed to some sick version of what the Senate presented. I don't quite get why the DEC was taken out of the bill, when all they want to do is help. I am lost as to what the issue with the DEC was, and why we got no clarity on it's issue.

I am confused as to why we have been subjected to some “quick fix” for an issue that has been brewing for years.

I am disgusted at some of the things that are proposed in this “quick fix” approved by the House of Appropriations. Why would teachers have to reapply for their jobs in the new district? So you can fire those you don't like? So we can lose more teachers? So less people will reapply just because it's simpler to find another job?

My next question is, why would we get rid of the unions? So teachers' rights are completely eliminated?

The topic I am most heated about has to be this uncertified teacher business. Who in their right mind would think that hiring an uncertified teacher would even REMOTELY fix the problem? You all argue that DPS test scores are too low, how would hiring an uncertified teacher increase those test scores you all love to cry about?

This would NEVER happen at a school in Bloomfield Hills. Is it because we're black? Or maybe because you think we're poor? Oh no, I've got it – it's because we're just poor black kids from Detroit who don't have a future anyways. Why promise us anything when we probably won't live past 18, right? Let's give them some sick bill that we know they won't read, so they'll stop fussing and go back to school right? WRONG! I know my rights, and I know that the color of my skin does NOT give anyone the right to give me any different of an education than a white girl would get.

Everyone's so worried about how I'm losing my education from four sickout days. No one's taking into account the fact that I went almost a full semester without a real English teacher. Let's count up those days and see just how much education I missed from those MONTHS, while the powers that be took their sweet time finding a teacher that was actually willing to step foot into DPS due to the instability and lack of value of teachers by this state run district. Let's say I went roughly three-and-a-half months without a teacher. That means that I had about 13 weeks with no teacher. Each school week has five days, so I went 65 days without a teacher. I missed 65 hours of 10th grade English! While we sit around worried about four measly days of sickouts, I think we should worry about the fact that I'm not the only student in this school system going through this. I am just ONE student. All students are dealing with this issue, and we are losing our education due to slow legislation.

In conclusion, the state of DPS is sickening. The fact that everything revolves around money and power is repulsive. The fact that someone I DON'T know - and clearly doesn't care about me - holds my education in their hands is terrifying.

I feel as if there is no hope. If the current house bills are voted into law I just don't know what we would do. My future is doomed. All who read this letter please know that there are some students who know the issues and want to help, but if our future is in the hands of politicians who care nothing about us, what can we do but sit and watch as our educations are thrown down the drain?

Abraham Lincoln said, "The best way to predict the future is to create it."

If we want a change, we have to start acting. The House bills need to be rejected and we need to WORK to pass the Senate bills.

The last thing I have to say is that we need to stand together. If you are fighting for the children, then you are fighting with everyone fighting for the children. Arguing among each other is what is holding us back. We are all in this with each other and we need to continue working together – and truly be united and not divided.

Sincerely,

Imani Harris

*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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Media contact: Natalie Fotias at [nfotias@skillman.org](mailto:nfotias@skillman.org) or 313-393-1179