

Coalition for the Future
of Detroit Schoolchildren

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Coalition disappointed with late-night Lansing votes, will continue to advocate for Detroit schoolchildren

DETROIT – Coalition leaders today expressed disappointment with legislation passed late last night, but remain committed to improving educational outcomes for Detroit schoolchildren.

The Coalition maintains that the legislation provides only partial relief to a troubled Detroit schools landscape, and does little to correct the conditions that have led to the financial and academic crisis of Detroit Public Schools. Nevertheless, the diverse group of Detroit leaders remain unwaveringly committed to improving the city’s schools – in both charter and District sectors.

“I’m trying to quickly cycle through the stages of grief, and move on to coming up with solutions,” said Angela Reyes, Coalition co-chair and executive director of Detroit Hispanic Development Corporation. “Regardless of what decisions come out of Lansing, Detroiters will push forward in the interest of children, as we always do,” she added.

“This legislation, force-fed down the throats of members of the Detroit delegation, and against the bipartisan Senate Bill 710, is lumpy enough to choke an elephant, and is more poisonous than the Flint River,” said Co-chair Rev. Wendell Anthony of Fellowship Chapel and president of the Detroit branch of the NAACP. “It is a clear failure on the part of government to do its job, in representing all its people, and to protect those constitutionally it is duty-bound to serve. This so-called fix is not a fix at all. Detroit deserves better.”

“So many amazing and dedicated people – including Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan, the Detroit delegation of state lawmakers, business leaders across the state, Senators Goeff Hansen and David Knezek, clergy, teachers, and community leaders – have been working around the clock on a solution,” said Co-chair Tonya Allen. “We’re tired and disappointed, but we also know the real work ahead requires us to stand up and pull together to get Detroit schoolchildren the education they need. We knew that coming in. That’s why the Coalition formed in the first place. We wish Lansing could’ve helped create a better and more comprehensive solution, but nonetheless, we’re going to make sure Detroit kids get the education they deserve.”

Co-chair David Hecker, president of AFT Michigan AFL-CIO, echoed the sentiment, “Teachers, support staff, parents, Coalition members and community leaders are all going to dig in to do the best job possible to improve education in Detroit. That commitment doesn’t go away just

because bad legislation was passed. This isn't the first time Detroiters have been dealt a bad hand."

"Going forward, we must be even more diligent and determined to change what does not work, improve what does, and continue to fight for what was left on the floors of the House and Senate," said John Rakolta Jr., Coalition co-chair and CEO of Walbridge. "Our children are the future of society," he added. "Equal access to world-class learning environments and knowledge must be our top priority going forward. We owe nothing less to the future."

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.

The Coalition's 2017 report, Our School, Our Moment, is available at www.DetroitEducationCoalition.org.

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