

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Michigan House Must Act to Support the Detroit Public School System Now!

DETROIT – It is indeed unfortunate that we find ourselves once again at the threshold of deciding whether or not we will work to sustain the future of our children. The question before us is one of preserving the posterity of our state and nation, or whether or not we will allow them to continue to twist in the winds of uncertainty and insecurity. Thomas Jefferson once said “the care of human life and happiness, and not their destruction, is the first and only object of good government.”

Today we call on our state government to be good, to fulfill its constitutional duty, and to place people over profit, and children over ideology. Many of us have worked exceedingly hard to try and bring resolutions to critical issues confronting the Detroit Public Schools. Individuals on both sides of the aisle have both compromised and stood for what they believe is the proper action to be taken on this issue. We wish to thank the members of both the Democratic and Republican parties who have stood firm in their support of the children of Detroit and for the sake of public education in our largest city.

It is unfortunate that our children are being used as pawns in a political game that is not of their own making. The citizens of Detroit, “which by the way is a part of the State of Michigan”, are entitled to the same educational benefits, the same local governance rights, appropriate financial support, as well as the same requirements for certified professional teachers, like every other school district.

Why must Detroit continue to be the place for experimentation, humiliation, disrespect, and neglect by some who are in positions to do much better? It is said that some are angry at Detroit teachers because they were not in the classroom for two days demonstrating their concerns over work with no pay. How many legislators are willing to work with no pay? How many legislators have contributed a portion of their salaries to the Michigan Legislature to provide budgetary or operational aid to continue their legislative session? How many legislators have taken pay cuts to their health care, their pensions, as well as operating with little or no supplies in their legislative offices, and yet show up for work every day to do their jobs?

Detroit is not asking for anything special. Detroit is simply requesting what it is due. Detroiters are due appropriate funds to operate a school district, previously under state control for the past 16 years. Detroit is due the same type of governing structure as every other school district with its own local and empowered school board. Detroit is due classrooms that have adequate supplies, classrooms that are not over crowded, and classrooms that can promote the dignity and respect for our state and our nation. The city of Detroit knows this very well. We implore

the Michigan Legislature to understand that there is an emergency that does not require an emergency manager. Yet it does require some emergency action. This action is of course the passing in its original form Senate Bills 710 and 711.

Why does there seem to be so much resentment, disrespect, and total disregard for the people in the city of Detroit? Detroit as a city is one of the largest contributors of state taxes, pays the highest insurance rates in the nation, has some of the highest unemployment in the country, and yet continues to have a spirit reflecting hope and possibilities for the future. We are not looking backwards towards how we got here. We are looking forward to what must be done to move us away from here. We cannot do this without members of the House of Representatives doing their job by supporting all of the state's children, and doing it before it is too late. We call upon the Michigan Senate to stand firm with its original version of SB 710 and 711. We call upon the Governor to veto any bills that do not guarantee the appropriate financing for Detroit schools, a locally elected and empowered school board, a Detroit education commission to authorize the opening and closing of schools, and which respects the right of labor to do its job. We will either pay in manageable finances on the front-end by supporting education and the future of our children, or we will pay dearly on the back-end, leading to the destruction and the incarceration for our children.

The choice is ours and the choice is now.

- Rev. Dr. Wendell Anthony
Coalition co-chair
Fellowship Chapel
President of the Detroit branch of the NAACP

*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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