

Coalition for the Future
of Detroit Schoolchildren

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Coalition leaders decry DPS charges, continue push for reform

DETROIT – Coalition co-chairs decried yesterday’s announcement of alleged corruption at Detroit Public Schools, and urged the Michigan Legislature to press forward on the Senate’s proposed reforms of Detroit’s education system.

“This situation is indeed most tragic,” said Rev. Wendell Anthony, Coalition co-chair, Fellowship Chapel and president of the Detroit branch of the NAACP. “It could not have come at a more critical time. The system is working to root out abuse. We must not, however, allow this to deter building a better future for Detroit children and for democracy to return to this district. Detroit is better than this.”

The Coalition expressed confidence in the leadership of U.S. Attorney Barbara McQuade and DPS Transition Manager Judge Steven Rhodes to handle the alleged corruption.

“Judge Rhodes has laid out what is being done to prevent corruption from taking place in the district moving forward. And that’s what we all need to stay focused on: moving forward,” said John Rakolta Jr., Coalition co-chair and CEO of Walbridge. “We can’t let the corruption charges become an excuse to derail the sound legislation proposed by the Senate. The plans to fix the district and stabilize Detroit’s education landscape are in front of us. If we move backwards now, we’ll only continue to rob kids of their future.”

In addition to the extensive policies Rhodes is putting in place, the Senate’s Return to Excellence package assigns financial oversight of DPS to the Financial Review Commission.

“Community members, stakeholders and lawmakers from all sides of the table have taken part in a long, productive dialogue to get us to where we are today,” said Angela Reyes, Coalition co-chair and executive director of Detroit Hispanic Development Corporation. “We are on the verge of passing a comprehensive package of bills into law that would add structure and accountability to Detroit’s waning system of schools, laying stable ground for effective local governance. We need these fixes in place so that our city, state, and most of all our children, can reach a brighter 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.

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