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Superintendent of Schools

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Via Electronic Mail & U.S. Mail

Governor Gretchen Whitmer
P.O. Box 30013
Lansing, Michigan 48909
Email: whitmerg1@michigan.gov

RE: Settlement of Literacy Lawsuit

Dear Governor Whitmer,

As you know, a federal court of appeals has reached a landmark decision finding that the U.S. Constitution provides a remedy to “children relegated to a school system that does not provide even a plausible chance to attain literacy.” Here, the children are Detroit students and the school system is Detroit Public Schools (“DPS”) as managed by the State of Michigan. The decision shines a bright light on the State’s failures toward the school district’s children and employees, mainly teachers. Despite the district’s improvement under an elected empowered school board and appointed superintendent, the legacy of state control will negatively impact children and the community for years. Accountability and justice are required.

We send this note asking that you settle this matter. We ask that you consider settlement because the record on education simply does not align with the legal position taken by the office and the Michigan Attorney General’s Office in this case. Put another way, your demonstrated understanding of the need to remedy inequity does not support the position of your predecessor or the continuation of this case. Now that this decision has been rendered, there is no better time to settle.

We respect your advocacy for traditional public education throughout the state and in Detroit. However, we encourage you to stop listening to attorneys and rely on your instincts. Although the State made small steps in the right direction through the creation of Detroit Public Schools Community District (“DPSCD”) with an empowered locally elected School Board and the restructuring of DPS’ debt, the journey to accountability and investment is not complete. More importantly, the State has not addressed the legacy and current inequities perpetuated within its K-12 funding structure or the deteriorating school building infrastructure that was neglected under state control.

Governor, now is the time for you to leverage this decision to make inroads in the historic and current inequity that holds back the potential of our students.

Thank you for your attention to this correspondence and we intend for it to be received with respect and due attention.

Sincerely,

Iris A. Taylor, Ph.D.
Board President

Sincerely,

Nikolai P. Vitti, Ed.D.
Superintendent

Students Rise. We all Rise

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