



Michigan Parents for Schools

Working for excellent public schools—for our children and our communities

For immediate release

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Michigan Parents Want Help for Their Schools, Not Takeovers

Gov. Snyder's executive order takes our state in the wrong direction

Ann Arbor, MI (18 March 2015) — Today, Michigan Parents for Schools released an open letter to Michigan Governor Rick Snyder, asking him to reverse his order taking responsibility for troubled schools away from education professionals. The letter was joined by a number of grassroots parent organizations from around the state.

In an executive order he signed last week, Gov. Snyder transferred the functions of the State Reform/Restructuring Office (SRRO) away from the Michigan Department of Education and the elected State Board of Education and gave it to the Department of Technology, Management and Budget (DTMB), which answers directly to him. The SRRO has the authority under law to take over the lowest-scoring 5% of schools in the state.

While the Snyder Administration points to DTMB's experience running the state's education information system as evidence of their ability to take on the task, most school advocates remain unconvinced. "This state takeover system, which was rushed into law five years ago, has never offered a real solution to the problems faced by struggling schools," says MIPFS Board president Jennifer Tanau, an Ann Arbor parent. "But now responsibility for troubled schools will be given to a state department with no expertise or experience managing schools. This is an awful way to protect our most vulnerable students."

"As parents, we really want local control of our schools," says Rockford parent Christie Ramsay, director of Friends of Kent County Schools. "Any system to help schools in trouble needs to involve local educators, parents and citizens. If the local community is not behind the changes, how long can we expect them to last?"

In the last legislative session, MIPFS and local grassroots affiliate groups proposed legislation that would replace the state takeover provisions with a system focused on building local community support. Experts would review troubled districts, and local stakeholders would be convened to hammer out an agreement that addressed the areas of concern. The state would still have the power to insist on certain measures, but only those identified as needed by the expert review team. Local groups, including parents and other community members, would be in charge of creating and implementing changes needed to improve their schools.

All Michigan school districts have struggled with shrinking resources, notes MIPFS executive director Steven Norton, and this has made it harder and harder for schools to cope with increasing demands and the dramatic rise in child poverty. “Simply having the state take over schools will change very little – they need adequate resources and targeted technical assistance to serve their students and make needed changes,” he says.

Michigan Parents for Schools is a nonpartisan, public interest advocacy organization dedicated to bringing the parent voice to policy debates that affect our local, community-governed public schools. MIPFS works to help parents understand and speak out on policy issues, get organized locally, and be constructive partners in local school governance. For more information, our web site offers a significant archive of legislative analysis, public testimony, and education policy news: <http://www.mipfs.org>.

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Information on MIPFS’s alternative to state takeover, called the “Parent Proposal to Assist Struggling Schools,” can be found online at <http://www.mipfs.org/parent-proposal>.