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Details:

(FORM UPDATED: 08/11/2010)

WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE ... PUBLIC HEARING - COMMITTEE RECORDS

2009-10

(session year)

Senate

(Assembly, Senate or Joint)

Committee on ... Education (SC-Ed)

COMMITTEE NOTICES ...

- Committee Reports ... **CR**
- Executive Sessions ... **ES**
- Public Hearings ... **PH**

INFORMATION COLLECTED BY COMMITTEE FOR AND AGAINST PROPOSAL

- Appointments ... **Appt** (w/Record of Comm. Proceedings)
- Clearinghouse Rules ... **CRule** (w/Record of Comm. Proceedings)
- Hearing Records ... bills and resolutions (w/Record of Comm. Proceedings)
(**ab** = Assembly Bill) (**ar** = Assembly Resolution) (**ajr** = Assembly Joint Resolution)
(**sb** = Senate Bill) (**sr** = Senate Resolution) (**sjr** = Senate Joint Resolution)
- Miscellaneous ... **Misc**

* Contents organized for archiving by: Gigi Godwin (LRB) (August/2011)



THE BUSINESS COUNCIL
ECONOMICS EQUITY EXCELLENCE

January 4, 2010

The Honorable John Lehman

Education Committee

Room 310 South
State Capitol
P.O. Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707

Re: Support for Senate Bill 405

Mr. Chairman **and Members of the Committee:**

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of Bill 405.

As Business owners in Metropolitan Milwaukee, we recognize the need for clear accountability and good management practices to be successful.

We also believe that our community and our economy cannot survive and grow without better educated citizens and we as others in the business community have struggled to find skilled and educated individuals in the city of Milwaukee that can fulfill our employment needs.

The Majority of the Board of Directors of The Business Council Inc. (TBC) is in support of Mayoral Governance of MPS. While we are fundamentally in agreement with a new Governance structure we do feel that a plan by the Mayor or Governor should be produced sooner than later and distributed to students, parents, the business community as well as the community at large.

The turning around of MPS is urgent. It is not something that we can wait on, study, or fix with a band aid. It's something that we must do today.

Sincerely,

Carl Brown
Chairman



Stromme, Denise

From: Rich Walt [rwalt35@wi.rr.com]
Sent: Monday, January 04, 2010 7:01 PM
To: Sen.Lehman
Subject: Please Oppose SB 405 - Mayoral Takeover of MPS

Dear Senator Lehman,

While I support reform of Milwaukee schools, I oppose a mayoral takeover of MPS (Senate Bill 405). The real issue here is that the mayor wants more control of more federal dollars. As an educator for 25 years, I can speak from experience in stating that the only meaningful changes for children start in the home-and are reinforced in the schools. When parents do not place a substantial value on education, or do not support their schools through reading at home, doing homework with their children or involvong themselves beyond a quick conference; the children feel no urgency to improve.

Reform of MPS will only work if parents, educators, and the community are meaningfully involved. Democratically elected school boards ensure that parents, educators, and neighborhoods have a direct influence over their schools. SB 405 undermines this democratic process and disenfranchises parents and communities in Milwaukee.

Meaningful reform will not occur through a mayoral takeover that offers no guarantee of educational improvements for MPS students. Such a takeover is divisive and would guarantee only one thing - eliminating the direct, democratic influence Milwaukee voters have on their public schools. The mayor has no track record with managing his own city let alone a huge school system.

I strongly urge you to oppose SB 405.

Thank you,

Rich Walt
2125 W Mallory Ave
Milwaukee, WI 53221-4260



Stromme, Denise

From: Kevin Flaherty [kevinmflaherty@sbcglobal.net]
Sent: Monday, January 04, 2010 10:00 PM
To: Sen. Lehman
Subject: please oppose Mayoral takeover of MPS...

SB 405?

January 4, 2010

Senator John Lehman, Chair, Committee on Education
Room 310 South
State Capitol
P.O. Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707

Dear Senator Lehman,

I am writing to express my opposition to the Taylor/Colon bill for mayoral takeover of Milwaukee Public Schools. While MPS clearly has its challenges, this latest experimentation will not be helpful to MPS's students and instead, be harmful to the rights of Milwaukee's taxpayers and voters.

Appointments by the Executive branch have their place when the scope of the governing body is narrow and specialized in fashion, such as financing authorities, and particularly if reliance on tax payer finance for conducting its affairs is low. The Milwaukee Police and Fire Commission is another example where mayoral appointments are appropriate.

However, when a governmental body has both a broad, critical mission such as education *and* a high reliance on taxes, full citizen representation is needed. Milwaukee voters should hold the MPS School Board accountable at the polls, but they should do so at the polls and not via legislative fiat.

I am concerned that legislators from outside the City of Milwaukee may act contrary to the wishes of most voters who actually have children enrolled in MPS. I believe the legislature could be more helpful if it could help eliminate any funding disparities Milwaukee may face by having a disproportionate number of students living in poverty, and having to contend with the funding nuances of the voucher school program.

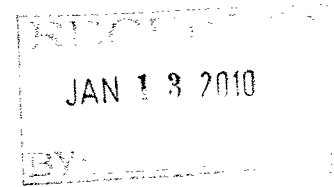
Please oppose the Mayoral takeover of MPS.

Regards,

Kevin Flaherty
3492 N Humboldt Blvd
Milwaukee, WI 53212
(414) 964-8412



Dave Bradford
3724 West Florist Ave.
Milwaukee, WI. 53209



Senator John Lehman
Room 310 South, State Capitol
PO Box 7882
Madison WI. 53707

Comments before senate committee 1/05/10

I stand here in opposition to SB 405, 437 and any other numbered, lettered or otherwise enumerated bill.

In the early 1800's, Reverend Matthias Burnnett remarked; "To God and posterity you are responsible for your rights and rulers. Give not your children reason to curse you for giving up those rights and prostrating those institutions which your fathers delivered to you."

As opposed to a democracy, instructions for the proper use of the representative republic in which we live, found in the Declaration of Independence, state that "governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed." Yet through this proposal, you will further erode personal responsibility, by law, from the owners and financiers of our system of self governance.

It is important to note at this point that no government at any level, has money to give or spend that it has not first taken from we, the taxpayer!

Through this short sighted effort to correct the financial and moral morass of mismanagement within MPS, I'm being asked to substitute the villainy of 9 tyrants 7miles away, with the villainy of hundreds of tyrants 70 miles away! Actions by both groups within the last few months have not demonstrated any form of moral compass.

The Bible tells us that "we reap what we sow." We have been here over 7 hours now discussing what to do about this truth. The Bible further tells us that "no man can serve two masters." Proponents of these competing bills leave no doubt where their allegiance lies! We can get federal money through the 'race to the top" program. As members of a government body, you are well aware of the fact that monies you disburse come with

strings attached. No great study is needed to see the correlation between government involvement in education and declining student proficiency.

While I believe each and every member of the MPS school board deserves dismissal, it is not your prerogative to remove this level of control from the parents whose children are being indoctrinated within this system.

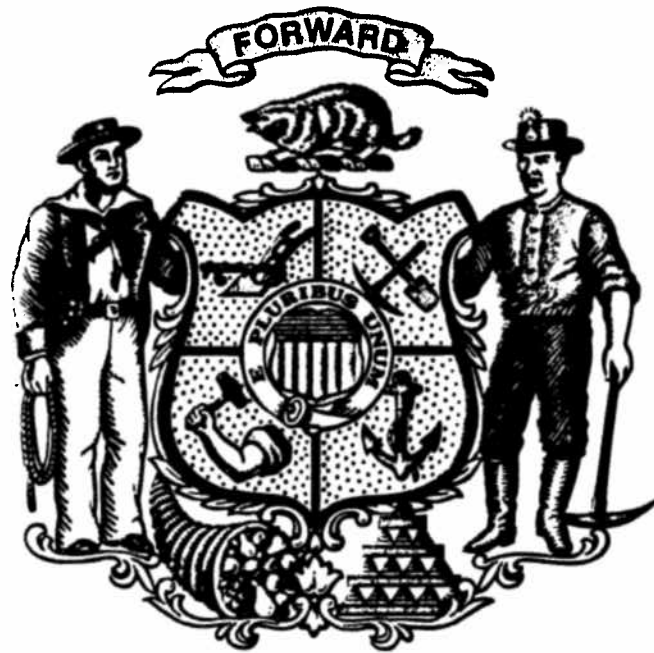
Inquiry has been made as to the beginning of the decline in our schools. Twenty years ago, thirty? I believe it was the Engle vs. Vitale decision of the Supreme Court in 1962 that removed prayer from school which precipitated this ruinous decline and produced the multitude of maladies we now face. We have not arrived at this point overnight.

Might I suggest that once you return home, you dig out your copy of the United States Constitution, which you must by "oath or affirmation support and uphold" before assuming your office, and read the first line. Not the first line in the preamble, the first line in the constitution itself. "All legislative power herein granted, shall be vested in the Congress.... As a result of this revelation, consider the erroneous assertion that the Supreme Court makes the law of the land. Reading the entire document will leave you without the phrase "separation of church and state." You should then dust off the 10th amendment, which pertains to states rights, grab your bootstraps, stand tall, represent the state of Wisconsin properly, and demand that the Bible be taught in our schools. I submit to you that the ills within all of Wisconsin's public schools will be rectified!

Consider the reason your children will have to curse you!

Jesus be with you!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dave Bradford". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a prominent loop at the end of the last name.





LENA C. TAYLOR

Wisconsin State Senator • 4th District

HERE TO SERVE YOU!

Testimony of Senator Lena C Taylor

Senate Committee on Education

SB 405 – The Milwaukee TEACH Act

Tuesday, January 5th, 2010

Honorable Chairman Lehman and members of the Senate Committee on Education,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today about an issue that is of the utmost importance for the children, community, and taxpayer's of Milwaukee. An education is the number one tool that we can give our students to overcome the challenges that face our city, with devastating poverty being the greatest. So many of us in the Legislature, enjoyed a sound education which opened doors to new adventures, new careers, new outlooks on life. I am no different. My time as a high-school student in Rufus King was well-spent as I look back. When I wanted to quit, and my mother made me go, it was so that I could go to college, then to law school, then into practice, and onto elected office. Without a sound educational system and parental involvement, my life would be markedly different today.

The importance of education, both in my life, and in the life of every child in Milwaukee, has led me to two very important conclusions. First, the governance structure of MPS is structurally broken and has not and cannot rise to meet the challenges placed before it. Second, Wisconsin must take a step to change this governance structure with a model that has worked to produce marked change and improvement in the educational outcomes of our children.

The Milwaukee TEACH Act or SB 405 is the product of those conclusions. The TEACH Act or Milwaukee Transforms Education for All our Children Act, is a compromise bill representing the transformational change that Governor Doyle and Mayor Barrett called for and the importance of maintaining an elected school board which is a value that Representative Colon and I insisted be included. Transformational change of the school system for all children in the system is the fundamental goal of this legislation, a goal that is rooted in the needs Milwaukee has and the challenge that President Obama has issued to us in the Race to the Top application process.

Milwaukee Public Schools are in need of transformational change. They can be no doubting the facts and the data about MPS educational performance.

- Milwaukee Public Schools is a school district that has been categorized as a District Identified for Improvement (DIFI) for 5 consecutive years for failing to achieve proficiency in reading and math across all grade levels.

- Over 70% of tenth graders in MPS did not achieve proficiency in mathematics OR reading this past year, according to the DPI
- The new report from the National Center for Education Statistics shows Milwaukee 4th and 8th graders test worse in math than most of their counterparts in urban districts around the nation, 4th graders only scoring better than children from Detroit.
- Our minority achievement gap is the worst in the nation in 8th grade reading and second worst in 4th grade reading. We had the second worst achievement gap in 4th and 8th grade mathematics compared to the rest of the nation.

We all know these are not new problems for MPS. Rather, they have been outcomes that unfortunately, we come to expect when we should be shocked. The very crucial element of any system is the ability to react to problems with bold and transformational fixes. This crucial element is missing at MPS. So we must change the system.

In moving away from the system that has long tolerated rather than combat these outcomes, the Milwaukee TEACH Act provides mayoral accountability over the school system in Milwaukee. Milwaukee will join with other districts such as Boston, New York, Cleveland, and Chicago that have mayoral accountability of schools in place with marked gains and improvements in outcomes.

But please don't take my word for the success of mayoral accountability. Rather, consider these facts:

In BOSTON, where mayoral accountability began 1993:

- Test scores have shown steady gains in student achievement EVERY year since mayoral accountability began
- Achieved double digit gains in proficiency in math AND reading for 10 grade students between 2003-2006
- Low Income students showed the most dramatic gains – a 20% increase in math proficiency in low income students between 2003-2006

In CLEVELAND, where mayoral accountability began 1997:

- Reading proficiency: 29% gain for 10th graders from 2004-2006
- Math Proficiency: 38% gain for 10th graders from 2004-2006

In NEW YORK, where mayoral accountability began in 2002:

- Narrowed achievement gap in math (12.5%) and reading (6.4%) since 2002
- 37% increase in the number of NYC students meeting or exceeding state standards; 18.3% increase in the number of NYC students meeting exceeding the state standards in reading
- By 2005, 57% of NYC students achieved at or above the basic level, significantly higher than the national average for large urban districts. This was a 4% gain since mayoral accountability took effect in 2003 and the largest growth in the country that year.
- New York City schools have seen a 9% increase in graduation rates. In addition, teacher salaries have increased 43% since 2003.

And in CHICAGO

- 15% increase in elementary age reading proficiency between 2003-2006; 14% increase in middle school age reading proficiency
- 18% increase in elementary age math proficiency between 2003-2006
- 7% increase in graduation rates and an 8% increase in college enrollment in the last four years

As I researched these systems and the outcomes they provided, I noticed the one thing that provided direction and leadership for the school systems, was the consistency of educational planning, administration, and vision. The lack of consistent vision and leadership is the unfortunate failing of the board governance system.

Under the Milwaukee TEACH Act, there will be a consistent vision and plan for education in our city. The Mayor, facing the voters of the city every 4 years, will be responsible for appointing a superintendent to create an education budget and manage our city's schools system. With this new policy a vision and plan can be allowed to create the change that we all wish to see in MPS, one that is accountable and to the educational needs of our children before all else.

In transforming our school system, the need and value of the elected school board is fully recognized. As I stated at the beginning of my testimony, a solid educational plan and parental involvement kept me in school. Under the Milwaukee TEACH Act, the school board alone has the power and freedom to become the parental ombudsman to the school system. The board will create and manage all aspects of parental involvement, after-school and community programming, and pupil discipline. In addition, the Board would advise the superintendent on matters related to instruction and the progress of pupils. To those who say this plan neuters the school board, I respond that now, more than ever, the school board can best serve its constituents by becoming the advocates of parents, students, and the community.

There are other important points in the legislation that we must make today.

Reauthorization Referendum – taxpayers in Milwaukee will have the opportunity to reauthorize mayoral accountability of the schools in April of 2017. If this system works, voters can retain our plan or jettison it.

Financial and Budget Advisory Commission – the Milwaukee TEACH Act requires that a commission of six members serve as an advisor to the superintendent on budget development and receive and review the annual GAAP audit of the district. Members include the city comptroller, common council president, school board president or their designees and 2 members appointed by the mayor.

Milwaukee School Zones – The TEACH Act provides the framework and expenditure authority for potential Race to the Top dollars and governance of wrap-around services. This part of the plan is modeled after the successful Harlem Children's Zones that immersed areas of poverty in intense resource allocation and are breaking the cycle of poverty.

It is also apparent that in this legislative discussion there are many misconceptions that we must address..

First, it is not undemocratic to make a mayor elected by the people responsible for the schools in Milwaukee. More people exercise their right to participate in our democracy when electing a mayor than a school board election on it's own. Representative Colon has more to say about this matter.

Second, this bill is not an attack on unions. Not one subject becomes prohibited under collective bargaining in this bill, although many argued that it should prohibit subjects. The worker's right to unionize and collectively bargain are maintained. The TEACH Act changes the "actor" in the bargaining from the board to the superintendent.

Third, the Milwaukee TEACH Act is not and has never been a pro-school choice or charter bill. You will quickly notice that only once are the words, "Milwaukee Parental Choice Program" listed in this bill (pg. 36), and only then as current law in a section of this bill. By enacting SB 405 we are not positively or negatively commenting on the choice or charter program in Milwaukee.

Fourth, to say that this transformational change is not an element of or important to our state's Race to the Top application, is to avoid the painfully obvious facts. It is accurate that Wisconsin needs to make no change to MPS governance to qualify for Race to the Top funds. However, making no change greatly hinders the success of our application. It is readily apparent to any person who reads the Race to the Top application or has listened to the President or Education Secretary Duncan (the people making Race to the Top decisions) that the administration is seeking evidence of massive transformational change that will add weight to a state's application. I can confidently say that without transformational change to MPS, every school district in Wisconsin is threatened with the loss of Race to the Top funds.

To close, there are no quick fixes or easy answers to a crisis this significant. We have never argued mayoral governance is an easy solution or one that should be entered into lightly. It is clear however that struggling urban districts, like Milwaukee, have seen results under this form of governance. We cannot continue to wait, our children cannot wait, and every district in Wisconsin cannot continue to wait. I ask for scheduling of a vote on this bill and your favorable consideration so that the Legislature may act on this bill prior to Jan 19th, the Race to the Top deadline.

I thank the committee for this hearing and at this time recognize my distinguished colleague and co-author Representative Pedro Colon.



SB405?



January 5, 2010

To: The Wisconsin Senate Committee on Education

Written testimony submitted by:
Julia Taylor, President
Greater Milwaukee Committee

A functional relevant educational system is the key to a city, a region and a country's economic success. Since the 80s, a central focus of the Greater Milwaukee Committee has been on improving the K-12 educational system in Milwaukee. The Educational Trust, School Partnerships, the creation of Bradley Technical and Trade High School and most recently the creation of the MPS Strategic Plan and Accountability and Support Group are all GMC efforts involving hundreds of thousands of dollars and many hours of staff and civic time. While we have seen some change and some improvement, we have not seen true systemic reform and improvement. The ability to sustain measurable change and long-term improvement does not exist in the current system in the Milwaukee Public Schools despite many efforts by many well intentioned people and civic/business groups.

Educational reform efforts began in the early 1900s in Milwaukee and have been well documented over the years. Governance changes over the past century included boards appointed by the City Common Council, at large elected non-partisan schools boards, district elected boards and the hybrid partially district elected and at-large elected School Board of today. Long ago fights between socialist and non-socialist candidates pre-shadowed the political schism that exists today on the School Board. The lack of accountable leadership is a central tenet in the history of MPS governance.

Milwaukee is far from alone in this country in our efforts to create a stronger school system that prepares our children with the basic tools to be successful in life. Since the 1980s, educational reform efforts have included vouchers, charter schools and changes in governance, including gubernatorial and mayoral control. Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, New York City, New Orleans, Philadelphia, Detroit and Washington D.C. are all cities where educational reform included some form of Mayoral control over Superintendents and School Boards.

Persistent racial achievement gaps are often the driving motivation for change. Recently, the 2009 McKinsey study of MPS indicated that the racial achievement gap for math and reading scores for 4th and 10th graders placed Milwaukee at the bottom of the list—below Detroit and other old industrial cities.

This central indicator of future success, along with persistently low graduation rates, calls out for systemic change. Mayor Tom Barrett and Governor Jim Doyle are seeking a legislative change to allow Mayoral control of the Milwaukee Public Schools. The Greater Milwaukee Committee supports this concept, with a belief that Mayoral control could be a key next step to true accountability for a turn around in the Milwaukee Public Schools, and we look forward to more details. A common theme in other cities enacting this governance change has been a failure to alter contractual obstacles to the successful delivery of educational services by well- trained, prepared and qualified teachers. Issues of tenure, dismissal, length of school day and year, performance and accountability both in the classroom and among the administrators can either be tools to create high performance classrooms and schools or barriers to effective educational reform. The ability to select the Superintendent and appoint the members of the School Board are also key elements of educational reform that has improved classroom performance in districts with mayoral control. These issues need to be addressed in a detailed plan.

To committee
read

Stromme, Denise

From: Roxanne Starks [roxannestarks@ymail.com]
Sent: Tuesday, January 05, 2010 12:55 PM
To: Sen.Lehman; Sen.Jauch; Sen.Erpenbach; Sen.Hansen; Sen.Olsen; Sen.Grothman;
 Sen.Hopper
Subject: [Possible SPAM] Public Hearing on Senate Bill 405, Senate Bill 437, and LRB 4037/1
Importance: Low

Gentleman,

I am unable to attend your public hearing because I am at work. For the many parents that I have spoken with, they too have to be at work.

The issues before us are important as is the voice of parents. I would like to share with you my thoughts on these issues.

Often times we become so hung up on the emotional side of issues, we miss the point of what is best for the children attending Milwaukee Public Schools today as well as in the future. While from the perspective of parents, we want the very best for our children so that they can not only reach their potential but can be successful in a global society.

I have spent currently 24 years in the trenches of MPS as a parent volunteer. While I have seen many incentives come but more importantly go, without any completion. This way of doing business has hurt our children, both past and present. I have learned many positive as well as negative things about MPS. Ironically, the more involved I became, the more I saw the lack of accountability. My summation of MPS is that it is a FORTRESS and as an outsider, you are only allowed in so far, after that the door shuts!

We must also recognize that Milwaukee Public Schools lacks MAJOR accountability in many areas. We can no longer exist with the status quo and continue to be the lowest performing school district in the nation! While we understand that there are many society issues that affect our parents and children, we must recognize that the ability to get a quality public education has to be provided to every child attending MPS, today and in the future, but we can't continue on the path we are currently on at this time!

We must move forward on a different type of governance structure that not only will provide accountability to all MPS staff, but the ability to provide consistency across the board for every child that attends MPS. The system currently in place is BROKEN. The No Child Left Behind legislation, simply brought everything to light (although it has its problems as well, another story)

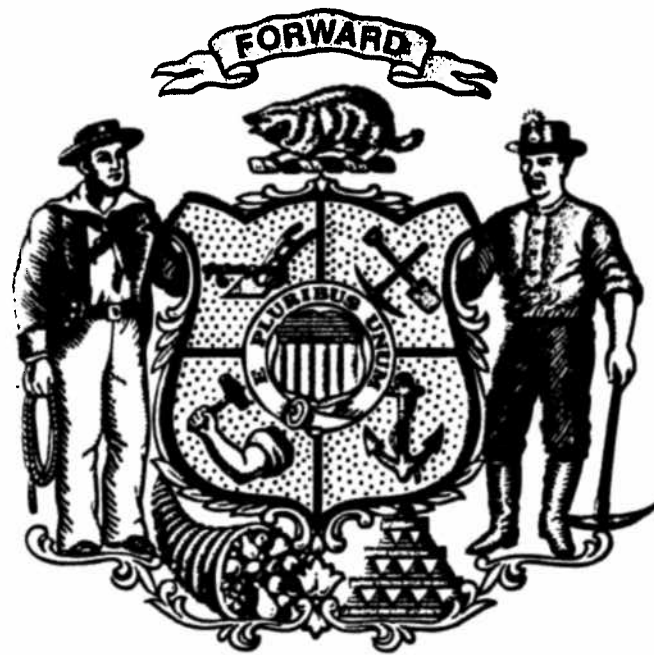
LRB 4037/1 doesn't address the real issues and is quite self-serving to special interest groups.

Senate Bill 437 provides the State Superintendent the authority to make MPS step up to the plate. This is something that should be automatic as the person who is in charge of all schools in the state. This authority is needed for every school in Wisconsin!

Senate Bill 405 provides accountability to all that can be taken to a referendum for the citizens. To vote yes or no for the continuance of this type of governance structure.

It has to be said that at the end of the day, you will have to say, have you made the best decision for the success of the children and the peace of mind of the parents of Milwaukee Public Schools. Will the resources be available to have consistency across the board for every child, will the data improve to have a higher graduation rate, more children attending school on a daily basis, major success in closing the achievement gap, and the ability to have major accountability in the largest school district in the state of Wisconsin.

Roxanne R.R. Starks
President
Milwaukee City Council PTA



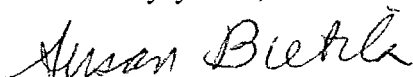
1/5/09 → 2010?

SB405?

Dear Legislators:

- I support the elected Milwaukee School Board, especially now when the School Board members are supporters of Public Education, not privatization. The move toward Mayoral control is patently undemocratic and includes no plan to improve Milwaukee Public Schools.
- With both Mayor Barrett running for Governor and Governor Doyle not running for another term, it raises the uncertainty level of what Mayoral Control would mean to the completely unknowable. I have not been impressed with the job the Mayor has done with areas he already controls, such as the Health Department. His suppression of the popularly passed Paid Sick Leave Referendum displays his lack of respect for the people of Milwaukee and disregard for the health of our community.
- Milwaukee Public Schools need adequate funding. There is no reason to think that Mayoral control would win the "Race to the Top" funding. Even if Wisconsin received the current package of federal funding, whatever portion of the state package Milwaukee received, would not solve the chronic lack of equity in funding.
- The report for the reform of MPS, formerly known as the McKinsey Report, is a flawed document. It is anti-Public Schools, anti-union and anti-Science. I am a School Nurse and am a member of the Governors Council on Physical Fitness and Health, the advisory group on School Health. Any report which proclaims, as this one does, that canned fruit cocktail is the equivalent of fresh fruit is equally worthless for improving education.

Sincerely yours,



Susan Bietila RN, School Nurse
1142 E. Hamilton St.
Milwaukee, 53202

January 5, 2010

MPS Central Office Auditorium
5225 West Vliet Street
Milwaukee, WI

SB405?

Senate Public Hearing – Committee on Education

I have lived in Milwaukee for over 63 years.

I am a teacherⁱ of over 30 years; I have a master's degree in reading and multiple teaching licenses. I ran an alternative school, and taught middle & high school science.

I absolutely oppose the proposed political take-over of MPS.

The "Race to the TOP" is simply a continuation of the draconian NCLB. This mayoral take-over masquerades as accountability insurance, but is pedagogically vacant and morally wrong. The educational money sought by this sell-out already belongs to us. Trillions of our tax dollars have been high jacked by hired politicians to fund warring around the world or corporate welfare giveaways. "Hold the system accountable" is really "Who can we blame?" This punitive behavior offers nothing for our children.

Kids rejecting school, as we all know, most often results from factors outside of the school; things written into the job descriptions of our representatives like employment, healthcare, etc. Doyle, Barrett, Taylor, et al, should do their jobs and work honestly to get our money back, not grovel for a mere chance at chump change, to the detriment of our community.

I agree that reform of MPS is needed. It's too big. But, moving control of MPS to a larger circle is going in the wrong direction.

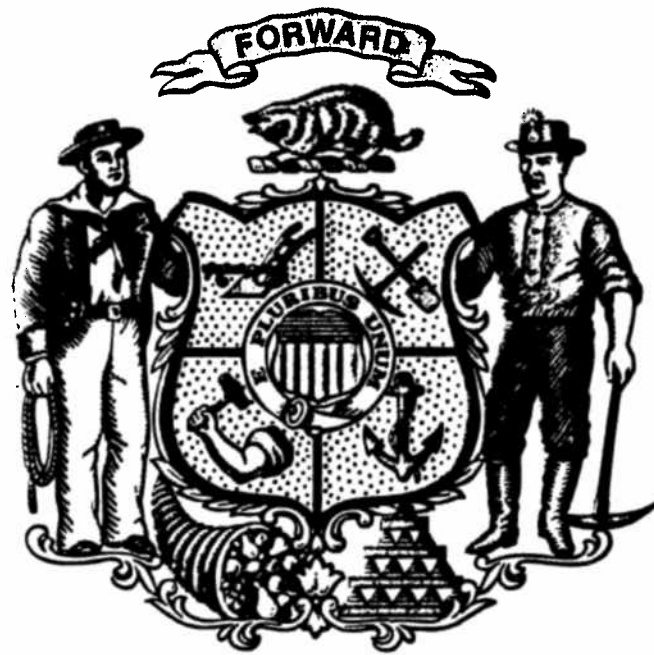
The change in learning environment that we seek for MPS is one of hope for the future, not fear of punishment today.

What is the value added of a revolving door of non-educators empowered only to punish based on test results they are not trained decipher. We need cooperation among those who know education – educators. We need to support students, families, teachers and schools, not further test kids, threaten teachers, and disenfranchise parents and the community.

Respectfully,

Robert Burkart-Lemke
301 North 73rd Street
Milwaukee, WI 53213

ⁱ Multicultural Community High School (GED) 1976 – 1984, MPS (adjudicated gang members) 1984 – 1986, South Milwaukee Middle School 1987 – 2007.



TO: Residents of Milwaukee
FR: Monroe Swan
RE: Mayoral Control of MPS SB405
PUBLIC HEARING: 01/05/10 @ Auditorium, 5225 W. Vliet St. 10am Until

The Injunction relative to requiring an individual to be faithful over a few things before being made ruler over many things ought to become instructive in this matter. I am presenting data from Wisconsin Legislative Fiscal Bureau memo comparing student academic achievement within City Of Milwaukee Charter School versus the MPS.

Review this data before we say, to the Mayor of Milwaukee, "...thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things.."

This data follows:

- "...on average, more students a MPS are performing better than the students attending charter schools under contract with the City of Milwaukee."
- "...in the 2008-2009 school year 49.9% of those attending a City-controlled charter school scored proficient or advanced in reading, while 59% of MPS students scored at that level in the same year."
- "In the area of mathematics, 49% of the tested MPS students scored at a proficient or advanced level in the 2008-2009 school year, while only 33.1% of students at the City of Milwaukee charter schools met that standard."
- "In recent years, Milwaukee's public schools have consistently outperformed the schools run by the City of Milwaukee by nearly ten percentage points or more. ...after averaging together test scores from the three recent school years, 49.6% of City charter school pupils were proficient and advanced in reading, and 32% were proficient and advanced in math."
- "Within that same time period, 59% of MPS pupils scored at the proficient or advanced level in reading and 45% scored at those levels in mathematics, resulting in an achievement gap in which MPS students are out performing City of Milwaukee charter students in both subjects."

<http://midcoastviews.blogspot.com/2009/10/poor-performance-of-city-of-milwaukee.html>

In view of the data cited above, with Milwaukee Charter Schools being much smaller and performing significantly worse currently operating under mayoral control, how can we even think about it: transferring control of the MPS, which is substantially larger and requires much greater attention, to the Mayor?

Accordingly, whoever is promoting mayoral control of the MPS who have failed to review the above data has failed to do due diligence which is a prerequisite for pursuing a legal remedy.

Whoever has read the above data and are still promoting Mayoral control of MPS, is obviously misguided.



Ellen Bravo
2584 N. Farwell Avenue
Milwaukee, WI 53211
bravo@uwm.edu

January 5, 2010

Senator John Lehman
Senate Education Committee
Wisconsin State Senate

Dear Sen. Lehman and Members of the Senate Education Committee:

I am writing in opposition to the mayoral takeover of MPS and in support of S405.

Proponents of mayoral takeover have unfortunately mis-characterized the problem. They equate support for takeover with a desire to change the status quo and with eligibility for Race to the Top funds.

In fact, eliminating democracy is not a prerequisite either for systemic reforms in MPS or ability to secure federal funds.

The current board of directors has repeatedly expressed dissatisfaction with the status quo and in just a few short months has taken significant steps toward improvements.

As for Race to the Top funds, Congresswoman Gwen Moore has pointed out that Secretary Arne Duncan assured her mayoral control is NOT a prerequisite for that initiative. However, what is required is unified action on the part of stakeholders.

Clearly the takeover proposal has generated significant opposition. What's needed is to come together behind the alternative proposal of Rep.s Grigsby and Coggs. This legislation will give the mayor a meaningful role in education without removing the role of elected board members or the checks and balances that are the hallmark of democracy.

The political changes that may bring a new mayor to Milwaukee remind us that systemic change remains even after ardent supporters of that change move on. This City's mayor will have an enormous task dealing with employment, poverty, and other major problems facing us. Let the education experts focus on education, with appropriate input from the City's leaders.

Thank you for your consideration.



Ellen Bravo
Parent of two MPS graduates



**Wisconsin Senate Public Hearing, Committee on Education
January 5, 2010, Milwaukee, WI**

My name is Pete Knotek. I am President of the Racine Education Association and represent 1600 teachers who work in the Racine Unified School District. I appreciate the opportunity to speak.

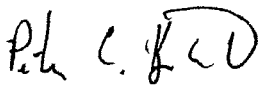
I speak in opposition to Senate Bill 405. The proponents of this bill have provided no coherent plan for transforming MPS so as to close achievement gaps and improve teaching and learning for all students. Top-down simplistic ideas such as those provided for in Senate Bill 405 would impede if not stop completely needed change in Milwaukee. An appropriate plan to correct the social injustices at play in Milwaukee would require considerable expansion of democratic ground level work of teachers, students, and whole school communities to improve teaching and learning. The focus of such democratic action should be on active student participation in a culturally diverse and powerful curriculum. The focus must also be on acting in coherent and coordinated ways to improve social supports in Milwaukee—a community torn apart by decades of poverty and racism. Such work needs to be focused on the voices of students, parents, and teachers as they work collaboratively with the Board of Education, administrators, and city leaders. Senate Bill 405 promotes none of this democratic action.

In Racine, a collaborative effort involving the elected school board, school district management, all employee groups, and students and parents is underway to transform teaching and learning in the school system. Two important goals of this work are to help kids in a sustained way, starting as early in their lives as possible, and to change teaching and administrative practices at the classroom level. Such change involves a system wide shared vision of public schools that prepare students to be college and/or career ready upon graduation. Such a vision cannot be imposed on school communities by a powerful mayor and superintendent. Rather, our actions in Racine support a superintendent who does the hard, necessary work of building authentic and respectful coalitions--coalitions that place caring adults around children throughout their lives.

I urge you to support "The Milwaukee Opportunity Plan" put forth by the WEAC and MTEA and alternative legislation that would address the root causes of teaching and learning problems in MPS.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today.

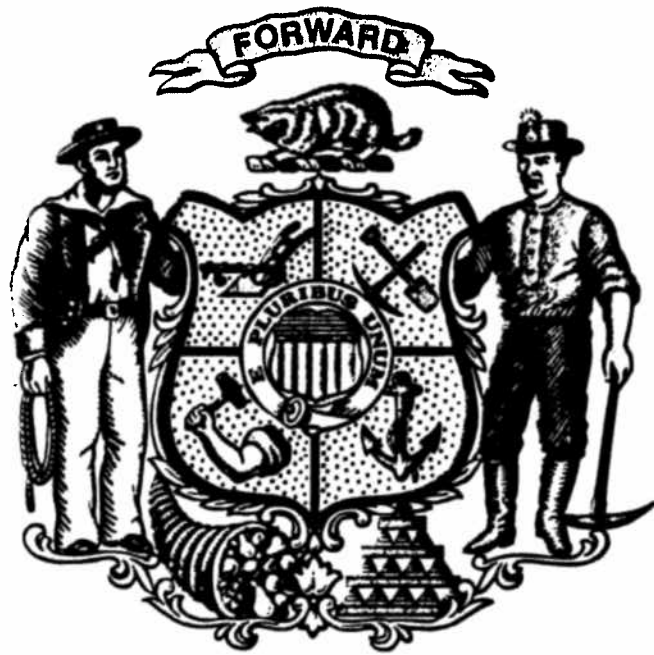
Respectfully submitted,



Peter Knotek, M.S., CCC-SLP

President
Racine Education Association
1201 West Blvd.
Racine, WI 53405-3021

Speech-Language Pathologist
Racine Unified School District
2200 Northwestern Ave.
Racine, WI 53404-2597



January 5, 2010

To: Senator John Lehman (Chair)
Senator Robert Jauch (Vice-Chair)
Senator Jon Erpenbach
Senator David Hansen
Senator Luther Olsen
Senator Glenn Grothman
Senator Randy Hopper

I am testifying today as a former MPS Board Member and a concerned education advocate.

Today you are hearing one of the most important issues affecting the future of education in Milwaukee. As we all are aware, education in Milwaukee can be complex, but we have made this particular issue so complicated that the average citizen is confused and is reacting emotionally versus understanding the real issue which is the successful education of Milwaukee Public School children.

Almost everyone agrees that **there should be a change** to improve student achievement in MPS. We are debating **how** that should be accomplished. Since I spent 8 years on the MPS Board and 3 years as its President, I can speak from real life experience. I have worked in many ways to improve that bottom line of MPS while on the board and as a funder for education at the Helen Bader Foundation. In fact when I left the board there were several initiatives that we believed made progress for our children e.g. all eighth graders were to take algebra because studies show that children who take algebra at that level graduate at a higher rate and are more successful in college. This initiative was changed within 2 years after the board turned over. A governance issue was also reversed after our board had put it in place. We had restructured ourselves to be a policy board allowing the operations to be governed by the superintendent. Eliminating committees and meeting on budget, broad policy issues etc. as a committee of the whole. All of it was reversed by the next board which means the Boards still gets involved the day-to-day operations of the district. I can give you examples if you wish but there is no time today.

I am supporting SB 405 because based on my experience as a board member I know that, unlike what most people believe, governance does impact the classroom because decisions are driven by the leadership in the district. I believe the district is in crisis and when an organization is in crisis it needs significant change to get it moving forward. The only bill that totally restructures the system is SB405. It changes the leadership of the district and gives accountability at a level that will make significant change possible.

I believe if SB405 is enacted the MPS system will have the political will to start to make change. With the Mayor as the "head" of the system and with a strong leader as a superintendent responsible for the operations, curriculum and finances, and an elected board focused on community and students relations, the system can be restructured with policies and procedures that have rewards and sanctions which will drive successful classroom performance for children.



January 5, 2010

TO: Senator John Lehman (Chair)
Senator Robert Jauch (Vice-Chair)
Senator Jon Erpenbach
Senator David Hansen
Senator Luther Olsen
Senator Glenn Grothman
Senator Randy Hopper

I think it is important to recognize that, *even without passage of SB405* the Milwaukee Public School Board is losing power over Milwaukee public schools. Director Falk has made this point repeatedly when he reminds us that “the District is in free fall.” The Board is losing power because it has no jurisdiction over the Independent Monitor appointed by the Federal Court to oversee special education services in the District. The Board is losing power because it has no jurisdiction over the Department of Public Instruction’s plans to implement changes owing to the District’s DIFI status. The Board is losing power because rising fixed costs far exceed the Board’s capacity to make policy decisions that will lead to increased revenues.

Add to the current steady decline in Board authority the obvious disintegration of the District ‘s relationship with City and County governments—the District cannot come to agreements with the County about equitable student transportation costs; the District cannot work effectively with the City to decide what to do about excess buildings or facilities maintenance--factor in the steady decline of County and City investments in public health social services that are vital to the well being of Milwaukee’s neediest families—a decline that forces the School Board to become the health and social services budget of last resort--and the real problem becomes obvious: Milwaukee *families* are losing power in the public domain because we have no cohesive public policy. The School Board as it is currently organized can do no more than provide a distraction or a scape goat that keeps us from facing these facts.

I support SB405 because I believe it is the only way we can move toward cohesive public policy for our neediest children and families, and for taxpayers who will find other places to live and other schools for their children if we do not reverse current trends.

If SB405 passes, we can move toward quality certification of *all schools* that receive public funding. If it fails we will not.

If SB405 passes, we can move toward policies that will help sustain those quality schools we do have now, and replicate successes wherever we can. If it fails we are certain to see precipitous deterioration even in the schools that are currently successful because policies imposed upon us will conflict with the successful practices in place at our high performing schools.



January 4, 2010

TO: Senators John Lehman

Senator Robert Jauch

Senator Jon Erpenbach

Senator David Hansen

Senator Luther Olsen

Senator Glenn Grothman

Senator Randy Hopper

I am in support of the Educational Reform addressed in Senate Bill 405. I believe that Mayoral Control of MPS is an excellent first step in the transformation of our public schools.

I believe that the status quo needs a shake up for new ideas to grow roots, for all children to learn and for our community to benefit from a well educated population. I believe that all children can learn.

As an educator, consultant and community advocate I encourage you to vote yes for SB405.

Sincerely,

Beth M. Harwood
N76 W13657 Upper Circle
Menomonee Falls, WI 53051



January 5, 2010

TO: Senator John Lehman
Senator Robert Jauch
Senator Jon Erpenbach
Senator David Hansen
Senator Luther Olsen
Senator Glenn Grothman
Senator Randy Hopper

I am writing in support of Senate Bill 405. As parents of a MPS student, I am concerned about the public school system in Milwaukee and the future of my now elementary student. There are great things happening in MPS, but there is also a great need to improve the quality of services provided to my child and other children. Senate Bill 405 will work to address correct some of the wrongs in the system. The bill changes the governance structure of MPS by making the superintendent a mayoral appointee, and Assembly Bill 534 grants the state superintendent the ability to intervene and support a failing school district.

I respectfully ask that the Wisconsin State Legislature convene this item immediately. Delay is no longer an option. The education crisis in Milwaukee is crippling the city, and all indicators show the situation is getting worse. We understand the political and process issues that accompany change of this magnitude are significant, but politics of adults has held the kids of Milwaukee prisoner for too long already.

As a former student and proud graduate of the MPS, I am hopeful that your distinguished body will have the courage and stamina to make a decision that will bring about a significant turnaround for our community.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Lloyd and Tammy Davis
3147 N. 49th St.
Milwaukee, WI 53216



WISCONSIN EDUCATION ASSOCIATION COUNCIL

Affiliated with the National Education Association

*Great Schools
benefit
Everyone!*

To: Members of the Senate Committee on Education
From: Wisconsin Education Association Council
Date: January 5, 2010
Re: Senate Bill 405, LRB 4037/1

The Wisconsin Education Association Council stands with the Milwaukee Teachers' Education Association in opposing a mayoral takeover of Milwaukee Public Schools, as proposed in Senate Bill 405, and, instead, advocating for reforms that are rooted in proven research and results.

Educators recognize that significant and system-wide change is needed for Milwaukee Public Schools. However, simply transferring responsibility to one person, such as the mayor, will not produce lasting results in struggling schools. We need a systemic approach that can be supported by those who work in the schools and with the students. This is not about making quick changes as a means to receive one-time federal monies. It is about establishing thoughtful policy that will engage the education and business community in a discussion about what we can do differently to help Wisconsin's students succeed.

Mayoral control won't guarantee that the essential elements needed for any successful school will be provided: small class sizes; safe and secure learning environments; modern technologies and curriculum; and most importantly, highly qualified, caring and competent teachers and support staff.

To close achievement gaps and boost student success, Milwaukee educators have developed the Milwaukee Opportunity Plan with a focus on what they know works best when it comes to student learning, leading to enhanced opportunities for students. Like the Coggs/Grigsby proposal, LRB 4037/1, this plan emphasizes fiscal accountability; increased parent involvement and voter participation; an acknowledgement of the need for a more consistent, high-quality curriculum; establishing Promise Neighborhoods through federal grants; and a small class size model for 9th grade similar to SAGE.

WEAC hopes these plans for real reform will refocus the discussions among policymakers about moving Milwaukee and the state forward. The future of Milwaukee's public schools is a statewide issue. As schools improve in Milwaukee, the community and the city's economic future will improve. And Milwaukee's success impacts the rest of our state.

If you have any questions, contact Deb Sybell, WEAC Legislative Program Coordinator, at (608) 298-2327.

Mary Bell, President
Dan Burkhalter, Executive Director





**Testimony Before the
Senate Committee on Education
January 5, 2010
Senate Bill 405**

I would like to start by thanking Chairman Lehman, members of the Senate Education Committee, and my Milwaukee colleagues for being here today. I would especially like to thank Chairman Lehman for showing true leadership in his decision to hold a public hearing on this proposal here in Milwaukee, where the impact of this bill will be felt most. The potential of a mayoral takeover of Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) is one of the most pressing issues this city has faced in years, which is why this opportunity for community input is so vital.

We must recognize the issue at hand. Senate Bill 405 is about a taking control from a diverse and democratically elected group. It is about a takeover of Milwaukee's education system. While it is apparent that MPS needs serious reform, these reforms must be real and effective if necessary improvements are to be made.

There are three points that deserve consideration: (1) Mayoral takeovers are not only ineffective, but have made public education worse for some students in other cities. (2) Without defending the status quo, we must also recognize the ongoing improvements being made at MPS. (3) There is a real alternative to education reform for Milwaukee—an alternative that is not predicated on mayoral takeover. No one defends the status quo, which is why Senator Coggins and I propose a commonsense alternative to reforming Milwaukee's public school system.

Mayoral Takeover in Context

Mayoral control is quickly becoming known as "the new tyranny."¹ Former U.S. Assistant Secretary of Education Diane Ravitch, once a supporter of mayoral takeovers, now believes this form of "authoritarian control" is unjustifiable. A noted education historian and scholar, Ravitch now understands that, if a superintendent is appointed by a mayor, his first obligation is to the mayor, not the children. Speaking against renewing mayoral control of New York City schools, Ravitch said, "It needs change because it lacks accountability. It lacks transparency. It shuts the public out of public education. It has no checks or balances. It lacks the most fundamental element of a democratic system of government, which is public oversight."² This is but part of her critique of mayoral control, seven years after she originally supported the takeover in New York.

¹ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/gerald-bracey/mayoral-control-of-school_b_240487.html

² <http://gothamschools.org/2009/02/06/diane-ravitch-mayor-shouldnt-select-the-chancellor/>

Chicago Considered

Chicago is most often claimed as an education success story, but 15 years after mayoral takeover a different reality is apparent. Considering student performance and the general health of its public school system, Chicago has not benefited from mayoral takeover. New critics of the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) takeover include the Commercial Club of Chicago, a group that originally supported the 1995 governance change.

According to the Commercial Club's most recent report, "Still Left Behind," "The 2008 test data show that most students in the Chicago Public Schools continue to fail."³ Even after almost 15 years of mayoral control, "Most of Chicago's students drop out or fail. The vast majority of Chicago's elementary and high schools do not prepare their students for success in college and beyond."⁴ Most troubling, the reported gains in test scores in Chicago appear to be false and result from the manipulation of data: "Recent dramatic gains in the reported number of CPS elementary students who meet standards on State assessments appear to be due to changes in the tests . . . rather than real improvements in student learning."⁵

In 2006, Illinois changed state standards, testing procedures, and made changes to the skills test itself, resulting in a falsified boost in testing scores. Timothy Knowles, Director of the University of Chicago Urban Education Institute, says that "many states have lowered (passing) scores on standardized tests to create the public appearance they are meeting federal standards. The practice sells children short."⁶ As an appendix to my testimony, you can find the details of these manipulated test scores. While achievement misleadingly appears to have jumped on the Illinois ISAT Exam, the standardized National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) scores tell a very different story about student performance under mayoral takeover.

In many of Chicago's high schools, not one student in the 11th grade is on track to succeed in a college-level math or science course. About half the enrolled students drop out of the non-selective-enrollment schools, and more than 70% of 11th grade students failing to meet state standards in math, reading, and science.⁷ These results in student performance come 15 years after Chicago's mayoral takeover.

³ <http://www.civiccommittee.org/Still%20Left%20Behind%20v2.pdf>, page 3.

⁴ <http://www.civiccommittee.org/Still%20Left%20Behind%20v2.pdf>, page 2.

⁵ <http://www.civiccommittee.org/Still%20Left%20Behind%20v2.pdf>, page 2.

⁶ Greg Toppo. July 12, 2009. "Chicago schools report contradicts Obama and Duncan." *The USA Today*.

⁷ <http://www.civiccommittee.org/Still%20Left%20Behind%20v2.pdf>, page 2.

The reality is that the only Chicago students prepared for college are concentrated in Chicago's selective-enrollment high schools, not the conventional public schools that educate the overwhelming majority of the city's youth. In 2008, only 8% of Chicago's high schools exceeded the state standards benchmark established in federal law by No Child Left Behind.⁸

Consider Milwaukee

We must want something better than this when it comes to the children of Milwaukee. Unfortunately, Milwaukee is internationally recognized as the most segregated city in the United States.⁹ In addition to segregation, Milwaukee sees astounding racial disparities in every aspect of life, ranging from employment, to income, to criminal justice, to infant mortality. Thus, the challenges we face are not in education alone.

In the face of these disparities, the newest Milwaukee Public Schools Board of Directors has taken multiple steps to improve the quality of education in Milwaukee. The current MPS Board has increased the number of math and science requirements from 2 years to 3 years. It expanded nursing services in public schools, a service that was at one time provided by the City of Milwaukee. And, as of May, 2009, the board froze its hiring practices and reduced contracting services. It made the tough cuts that any responsible administration would make in this difficult economic climate. As a result, the district saved \$10 million and did so without firing employees.

As a result of these and other changes, the improvements have been impressive. Since 1999, the MPS graduation rate has increased nearly 16%. Since 2002, state standardized math scores have increased by more than 13% for 4th graders and more than 15% for 8th graders at MPS. Last school year, MPS issued 12,000 fewer student suspensions than the year prior. Lastly, MPS has become a national leader in STEM-based learning among children of color.

Are MPS test scores high enough? No. Should we be satisfied with MPS? No. But should we put an end to the progress that's been made in recent years? Furthermore, do we really want to muddle the city's current priorities with yet another task? Do we really want to pit pupils against potholes and police? The answer is no.

The RACE for Success: A Real Alternative

In place of an undemocratic and unaccountable mayoral takeover, we must find the means to empower the people of Milwaukee and build upon proven reforms. Together, Senator Coggs and I have worked with others to develop a plan for MPS that brings all stakeholders to the table when it comes to education reform in Milwaukee. Rather than exclude concerned citizens, democratically

⁸ <http://www.civiccommittee.org/Still%20Left%20Behind%20v2.pdf>, page 8.

⁹ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2004/may/15/usa.schoolsworldwide>

elected board members, and those who play a daily role in the education of our children, this plan embodies the partnership required to achieve true student success.

At the same time, our proposal provides the Mayor of Milwaukee with an unprecedented role in the future of MPS, creating a structure of shared responsibility and joint accountability. It is the best opportunity we have to “Reform & Advance Children’s Education.” In other words, this bill will ensure a true RACE for Success.

To ensure that sense of shared responsibility, we propose a system of school governance based on partnership between the democratically elected MPS Board of Directors and Milwaukee’s mayor. This proposal will provide the mayor with a substantial role the selection of a new MPS superintendent. In addition, if MPS continues to see a need for academic improvement, the mayor shall receive the same powerful line-item veto authority that is currently available to the governor in our state budget process.

While the mayor will have the power to veto, the elected school board shall have the power to override such actions if they reach a two-thirds majority vote. By creating this series of checks and balances, this new level of authority for Milwaukee’s mayor will be held in check while, at the same time, a new level of accountability will be demanded of the elected MPS Board. In addition to investing new authorities in the office of the mayor, the RACE for Success makes several other positive reforms to public education in Milwaukee. After all, governance change alone will not solve the problems that Milwaukee faces.

Finally, this legislation will establish a “Partnership for Success,” consisting of the mayor, the school board president, the MPS superintendent, and the common council president. Within one year after enactment of this proposal, this newly established partnership will develop a plan for addressing the school district’s unfunded liability. In addition, the partnership will be tasked with reaching out to both public and private institutions in order to gain support for public education in Milwaukee.

Conclusion

The time has come for a new approach to education in Milwaukee. We need to have all hands on deck for education reform, not simply to rearrange the deck by letting the mayor appoint the next MPS superintendent, but to do the hard work necessary to move education forward in Milwaukee. No one wants to stand for “the status quo,” yet opposition to this status quo does not necessitate a mayoral takeover of our public schools. The lessons of Chicago can be seen in other cities under mayoral

Tamara GRIGSBY

State Representative
18th Assembly District

control. What's happened in those cities has resulted in a "pervasive culture of individual blame," one directed at the schools and individuals, particularly those from low-income communities of color.¹⁰

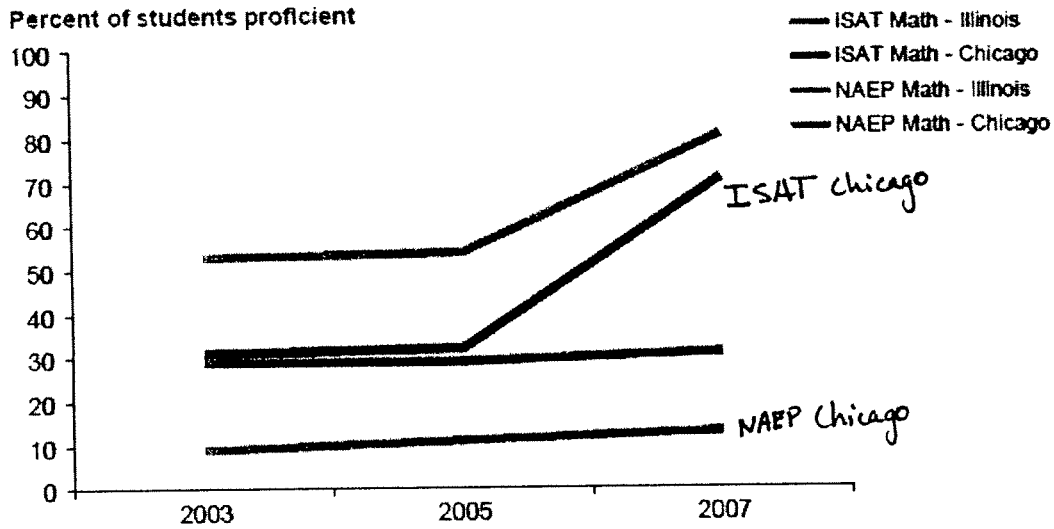
Increasing accountability in public education means moving away from accusations of blame. Mayoral control of MPS will not increase accountability, just as it did not in Chicago. Under the governor's proposed mayoral takeover, blame will continue to be pointed at the school board with only one difference. Under mayoral takeover, the school board will have no ability to fix problems, since it would have no power.

In President Obama's recent visit to Wisconsin, there was no mention of mayoral takeover. Instead, our president spoke about mobilizing the community behind education reform. He spoke about increasing parent involvement, not disenfranchisement. Finally, he spoke of collaboration, not divisiveness. These virtues, in addition to the promise of shared responsibility and joint accountability, are embodied in the proposal that Senator Coggs and I offer today. The RACE for Success is a true compromise that provides the Mayor of Milwaukee with a substantial role in education, while maintaining an elected school board that has real powers and responsibilities.

More than 150 years ago, Frederick Douglass described education as the pathway to freedom. That saying is as true today as it was then, but it is incredibly difficult to follow that path unless parents themselves have the freedom to influence the future of their children's education. That freedom depends not on mayoral takeover of our public schools, but upon the values embodied in the RACE for Success. With that, I hope we can move forward in this effort to reform education in Milwaukee. Thank you for your time.

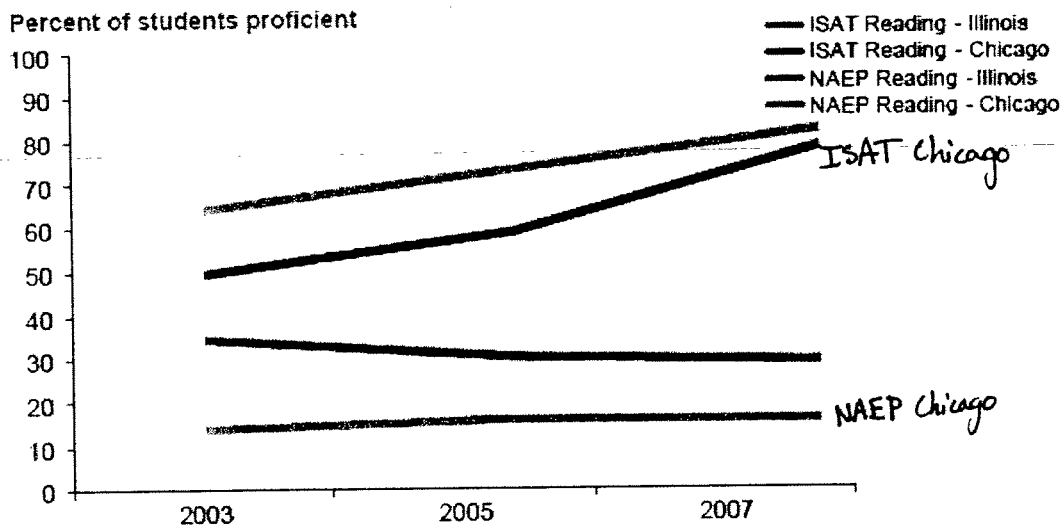
¹⁰ Pauline Lipman. 2004. *High Stakes Education: Inequality, Globalization, and Urban School Reform*. New York & London: RoutledgeFalmer Press.

8th GRADE MATH: ISAT VS. NAEP



Source: National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2003, 2005 and 2007 Math Assessments; Interactive Illinois Report Card; State Report Card

8th GRADE READING: ISAT VS. NAEP



Source: National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2003, 2005 and 2007 Reading Assessments; Interactive Illinois Report Card; State Report Card



SB 405?

Senate Committee on Education Hearing Statement from Disability Advocates on MPS Reform

Alianza Latina Aplicando Soluciones • ARC of Greater Milwaukee •
Disability Rights Wisconsin • IndependenceFirst •
Mental Health America of Wisconsin • Milwaukee Center for Independence •
NAMI Greater Milwaukee • Wisconsin FACETS

January 5th 2010

We thank committee members for meeting in Milwaukee today to hear from the community about proposals for reform in Milwaukee Public Schools. As advocates for people with disabilities, our agencies are on the frontlines working with students and families in Milwaukee Public Schools, where over 20% of students have special education needs. We see firsthand the human cost for those who are falling through the cracks. Our agencies have come together in coalition to share the concerns of students with disabilities in the MPS – and our vision for reform and positive change. We understand your committee will be considering several proposals to reform MPS. Although we commend those legislators and policy makers who have advanced these proposals, for their concern and sense of urgency about the need for reform, we are here today to share an additional perspective and do not support any of the proposals as they currently stand.

As you debate what action to take regarding the governance of Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) we the above community organizations representing persons with disabilities ask that you take the following into consideration.

First and foremost, the needs of children with disabilities need to be considered. Children with special education needs make up roughly one-fifth of the population at MPS and yet their unique needs and circumstances are being overlooked in all the discussion so far. Children with disabilities and their representatives need to be at the table for all future discussions.

Second, no matter what form of governance this body decides is appropriate for MPS there needs to be strong emphasis on accountability and leadership. This is something that has been greatly lacking in MPS for many years. There has been no sense of urgency to correct problems, just a lot of buck-passing, scape-goating, and finger pointing.

Accountability for achieving meaningful outcomes needs to be enforced across the District and at all levels. Lines of accountability must be clear and those who are accountable must have the authority to make necessary changes. It is useless to assign accountability to someone who has no power to change things. The accountability standards must be data driven. Those standards must rely on research based methods in

both the delivery of services to students and the assessment tools used. There must be clear benchmarks and prompt consequences if those benchmarks are not met. At a minimum, those benchmarks must include improved performance in reading, and math, and reduced behavioral problems indicated by suspension, as well as reduced drop out rates and increased graduation rates. These benchmarks should be applied district wide and in each school. We cannot rely on election cycles alone to hold decision makers accountable. There needs to be yearly performance reviews at all levels of the District, from the classroom to the superintendent's office. Given the constant political infighting and years of deteriorating performance in MPS, there needs to be outside monitoring to ensure improved results. MPS has proven itself incapable of self monitoring and self correcting.

Third, there needs to be a fundamental change in thinking at MPS and it needs to start with the expectation and belief that all children can be successful regardless of disability, race, or poverty. There are some great schools in MPS. There needs to be the expectation that all schools in MPS will be great schools. At a minimum a concentrated effort on raising reading and math scores, increasing graduation rates, decreasing the number of dropouts, decreasing suspension rates and stop telling students they are not wanted at school must be applied with full force. In order to improve behavior in the District, MPS must adopt a district wide system of positive behavioral interventions. MPS and others interested in the success of MPS must stop blaming students with disabilities for the problems of the system.

To bring about these necessary changes we endorse the Coulter Compliance Plan that the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) is attempting to implement in MPS and which has been ordered to be implemented by the federal district court here in Milwaukee. The Coulter plan provides for implementing a district wide literacy curriculum that is evidenced based and standards based. It calls for instruction in mathematics using research based curricula and state standards. It also calls for the development of a system of positive behavioral interventions that will eventually be used district wide.

Fourth, reform efforts must include the meaningful involvement and participation of parents. It is well settled that kids are much more successful in school if their parents are involved in their education. We need to create a partnership between parents and schools. Schools need to be a place where parents feel welcomed and involved. This effort must be culturally competent, universal, and multi-faceted. Schools need to open both their doors and open the lines of communication with parents. Without the support of parents and the broader community MPS is doomed to fail no matter who or what entity governs it. It will take efforts all across the community to turn things around in MPS.

Finally, it needs to be understood that fiscal responsibility includes investing in children on the front end. Early intervening services, including those called for in the Coulter plan for every student who is struggling with math, reading, or behavior, are the best and most cost effective way to ensure long term success. Those services are far less costly than supporting prisons or having an uneducated, unemployable population. We need to educate our students to become successful contributing members of society and stop

throwing their futures away through the school system's poor performance, finger-pointing, and academic neglect.

We come to you today because we are dismayed that the ideas we have just laid out before you do not appear in any of the legislative proposals you are discussing. Accordingly, we cannot support any of those proposals as is. For far too long, children with special education needs have been left behind in Milwaukee Public Schools at great cost not only to those students and their families, but to our entire community. And for too long, this important perspective has not been included in reform efforts. We call on you today to put an end to this injustice. We have shared with you our principles for MPS reform, a blueprint – the Coulter Compliance Plan- and our vision for improving outcomes **for all students**, including students with disabilities. The Coulter Compliance Plan would guarantee that every child in MPS who struggles with reading, math, or behavior would get effective, research based services quickly. The Coulter Compliance Plan could be a key component of meeting Race to the Top Requirements. We stand ready and willing to work with you as key stakeholders in MPS reform and contributing partners to systemic change. Let's come together as a community to ensure a system that puts children first – to establish a culture based on student success and **true accountability**, and provide students with the supports they need to succeed in school, and to graduate with the necessary skills to go on to higher education and employment.

For additional information contact:

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Kiarnan H. Butz

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53022*

(262) 501-4676 • b6719@aol.com

January 5, 2009

2010?

Dear Senator Lehman and Members of the Senate Education Committee:

I regret that my teaching duties prevent me from appearing in person at today's hearing. However, I wish to submit for your consideration the following prepared testimony.

As a professional educator and proud product of the Milwaukee Public Schools, I urge your full support of Senate Bill 405. This important legislation specifically empowers the mayor's office to directly appoint the district's superintendent. Similarly, it wrests control away from a little-known and historically ineffectual board of directors and places district governance in the mayor's more capable hands.

Having taught in three different MPS schools, I feel qualified to say that the system is academically bankrupt and fundamentally broken. Once a model of what public education should be, MPS has devolved into a burgeoning bureaucracy that lacks accountability, rewards mediocrity, and shelters incompetence. Its cumbersome policies and archaic governance structure promote inefficiency, compromise the physical and emotional safety of the learning environment, and frustrate the efforts of committed educators like me who still take seriously their charge to guide the social and intellectual development of children.

With graduation rates that struggle to rise above fifty percent and an historic inability to demonstrate Adequate Yearly Progress in reading and mathematics, it can hardly be argued that MPS is serving the best educational interests of its pupils or providing taxpayers the best possible return on their investment.

Recent test results serve to underscore the widening gap between the performance of MPS students and their counterparts in other big-city schools. Nearly two-thirds of MPS eighth graders scored at or below the basic level on the National Assessment of Educational Progress math exam given early in 2009. The same test shows that MPS fourth and eighth graders, on average, perform at a level below that of most special needs students across the state of Wisconsin. These results argue compellingly for immediate and sweeping change.

Mayoral control of foundering, big city school districts is hardly without precedent. Boston led the way in 1991 when it replaced its elected board with a mayor-

appointed panel. Since then the public school systems of Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit and New York City have all demonstrated modest gains under some form of mayoral receivership. Unless the City of Milwaukee follows their lead, MPS will continue to place at risk the future of every child entrusted to its care.

Again, I regret that my teaching duties prevent me from appearing in person at today's hearing. However, I thank you for your leadership on this issue and urge you to contact me if you have any questions regarding this testimony.

Sincerely,

Kiernan H. Butz
Teacher



Bama Brown-Grice

My remarks for the January 5th Forum.

2010?

SB 405?

The Milwaukee Public School system is now acting like a child of divorced parents. The power struggle between the Mayor's Office and the Current System mimics one of each parent trying to gain sole custody of a child. Though I use this parental analogy, it is my opinion that the parents of Milwaukee Public School children have been entirely left out of the conversation.

Asking the question: Who will run Milwaukee's schools is essentially asking, who will keep the promise of the dream for Milwaukee's children.

My question to you is: Who should be more concerned with their children's dreams than their parents.

In this current debate the voices of the parents are not being heard.

Once again, Milwaukee has forged ahead making decisions without realizing the greater context of community. We, the past, present and future parents of MPS students need to be heard. What do we want for our children?

I'm glad you asked.

Parents expect the district to provide a high quality and complete education. What do we mean by that? Our findings are not based on expensive studies and years of research, our findings are based on parenting, we want our children to like school. We expect them to have educators who actually teach and engage the students. We expect safe and secure surroundings for our children to learn. And finally we want a technically advanced environment that is competitive nationally and world wide. Each of these concepts focuses on the mental, physical, and technical growth that we want for our children.

In saying that in the current administration we already have in place a decade old School Board policy which states all MPS schools must have a working and completely functioning School

Governance Council with 51% parent participation. If we had implemented this legal policy throughout the past decade in full and not on paper, our parents would have had an opportunity to stress the points that I have stated above. This program might have also allowed for some direct parent involvement which is imperative to the success of MPS no matter who runs it.

Putting in place that all MPS schools have fulltime City-wide Parent Coordinators, whose position is similar to that of an educator, administrator, or community partner would also be a great policy for the success of MPS.

Will either the current system or Mayoral takeover understand the importance of providing professional Development to parents, Parents have a right to be trained, taught and provide input for all professional development and new initiatives which the educator are taught and teaching to our youth.

I am not taking sides in this debate. I am not going to endorse one plan or the other. What I aim to do is help remind people that this isn't about who is steering the ship – the current structure or the Mayor's Office. This is about all the people on the ship and the destination that we plan the reach, from the students, to the parents, to the community. These people are the legacy of our community and our school system. These people have invested more in this city than either party that is jockeying for control. So, I ask you when will these voices be heard, because that is who needs to be heard, that is who has the most to gain or lose. Listen to the parents; you are making decisions for their children. Listening is the very least you can do.

I can be reach at (414) 871-4199 to work on all parent/community initiatives.

Bama





SB 405?

**ACLU of Wisconsin
Urges Senate Education Committee to Focus on Adequacy**

Submitted by:
Christopher Ahmuty, Executive Director
January 5, 2010

Thank you for this opportunity to address the urgent need to improve Milwaukee's public schools. On behalf of the ACLU's nearly 8,500 members in Wisconsin and all of Wisconsin's school children, we have worked for years to make real the state constitutional right all of our children have to an adequate public education. Our courts have recognized this right, especially as it applies to children living in poverty, those learning English, and those with special needs.

The ACLU of Wisconsin welcomes Mayor Barrett's interest in Milwaukee's public schools. In order to improve our schools our whole community needs to focus its support on MPS. The interest and support of legislators from across Wisconsin, such as you, is also welcome, because ultimately the State of Wisconsin is responsible for ensuring that every Wisconsin public school student receives an adequate education. Support does not require control, however.

Changing the governance of Milwaukee Public Schools will not remedy Wisconsin's failure to provide an adequate education to far too many of Milwaukee's children. Mayoral takeover will not narrow the racial achievement gap, which should deeply trouble all Wisconsinites. Schemes such as mayoral control and school vouchers that focus on control rather than education in the classroom are bound to fail our children.

Rather than spending time and effort to push through a controversial takeover program that will not provide resources for programs that work, the governor, mayor and state legislators need to comply with the state Constitutional obligation to ensure that all Milwaukee children have the opportunity to obtain a meaningful, adequate education.

Those genuinely concerned about student performance need to evaluate what programs and services - such as smaller class sizes - help students succeed. They must look at researched-based findings to ascertain what programs and services best educate students with disabilities, English language learners, and low income students. In light of the racial achievement gaps in our community, they must look at whether specific programs are needed to support and improve the achievement of children of color. They must implement programs and policies to deconcentrate poverty in our schools, because concentrated poverty - not just a student's low income status - is one of the most significant barriers to achievement.

Those concerned about student performance also must deal with the reality that MPS simply does not have adequate resources to provide the services and programs to help students succeed - and in fact, has suffered from decreasing state budget support in recent years. Then they must determine the cost of programs that MPS students need, and ensure that those

programs will be fairly and adequately funded. That is the kind of adequate education that all Milwaukee students deserve - but are too often denied.

Moreover, efforts to improve the education of Milwaukee children must address the needs of all students who attend taxpayer-supported schools, not just those who attend schools operated by MPS. Approximately 1/5 of Milwaukee students attend private voucher schools at taxpayers' expense. Most of those schools perform no better than MPS, and in some cases fall short of MPS' performance. Yet neither the takeover proposal nor any other plan has been offered to improve education for those 21,000 Milwaukee children.

Nor does the takeover plan deal with the negative impacts of voucher school turnover on MPS schools. As a recent audit shows, each year far more students leave voucher schools for MPS than transfer from MPS to voucher schools. Some voucher schools close during or after the school year, for reasons ranging from poor physical conditions to financial mismanagement. Voucher schools can and do expel students who present behavioral and other challenges. And research has also shown that voucher schools educate a far smaller percentage of students with disabilities and English language learners than MPS - requiring MPS to divert a far greater percentage of its scarce resources to educate these children.

The demonstrated poor outcomes of voucher schools are a clear indication that quick fixes will not meet the educational needs of Milwaukee children. Voucher schools were sold as a free market, competitive model that would succeed without regulation, oversight or public disclosure - but overall, the system has failed and should be phased out, starting with those voucher schools that are underperforming MPS.

Nor should there be a headlong rush for other quick fixes. Neighborhood schools, for example, were sold - and funded - as a way to provide a better education to Milwaukee children, and they too have failed. Charter schools operated by entities other than MPS - like the ones run by the city of Milwaukee - have also failed to provide the quick fix that proponents promised. There is no evidence that yet another quick fix - a mayoral takeover of the public schools - will have any more success in meeting students' needs.

The primary constitutional responsibility for the education of Milwaukee's children rests with the State of Wisconsin. The state needs to put adequate resources into the public school system to provide the educational services and supports those children need - including adequate supports for children living in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty, low income children, children with disabilities, English language learners, children of color, and other children with special needs. It needs to ensure that the per-pupil funding for Milwaukee Public Schools students is at least comparable to that of suburban districts. It needs to phase out voucher and charter schools that are not performing, and impose the same accountability requirements on any schools that remain. Those are the reforms that will help Milwaukee students succeed.

Thank you for your attention.

Chris Ahmuty, Executive Director
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January 5, 2010

The Honorable John Lehman, Chair
Senate Education Committee
Room 310
State Capitol
PO Box 7882
Madison WI 53707

RE: Support for Senate Bill 405

Mr. Chairman and Member of the Committee:

Thanks you for this opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 405. My name is Joyce Mallory, former MPS school board member, and City of Milwaukee taxpayer.

I support this legislation, because for the past 15 years I have monitored the steady decline in student achievement in MPS. During that time thousands of students, primarily African-American have been failed by a system that has refused to make the kind of systemic changes needed to ensure they are learning and acquiring the knowledge and skills that will enable them to obtain post-secondary education, job training or a job. There is no sense of urgency by this board and it appears the status quo and making minor changes is deemed sufficient. It is not enough we cannot allow another generation of students to fail in MPS.

The lack of accountability for the poor educational outcomes that continue to occur within the district warrants a new level of attention. The traditional model of governance isn't working and its time to make a change that will hold a single person responsible for improving student outcomes. Currently, special interest groups are able to hand pick candidates for the board and get them elected, because of low voter turnout. In fact, they count on a low turnout so they can control who is elected. For example, when I ran in 1991, the MTEA ran a White candidate against me in a district that was then and still is majority Black, because they didn't like my position on labor related issues.

Senate Bill 405 will give the Mayor, who is elected by majority of the voters in the City the authority to select a superintendent who will be accountable to him to achieving clearly defined performance outcomes. Except for buying out the contract of then Superintendent Brown (at cost of over \$300,000) no Superintendent has been fired, although the failure rate for students, especially African American students is high.

The current governance and leadership model cannot create the kind of change necessary to transform this district. In recent years, I've seen the board ignore warnings about everything from the district's human resources operations to its fiscal viability. Reports

are tabled with little or no discussions and no corrective action has been taken. The thousands of children who are enrolled in MPS need you and other members of the legislature to take action that will allow them to receive a good education so they can become productive citizens. Their future and the future of the City of Milwaukee are dependent on how you act. Therefore, I ask you to carefully consider the merits of this bill and make a decision that will make sure children currently enrolled in MPS and future generations of children will have an equal opportunity to receive a good education.





January 5, 2010

To the Members of the State Senate Committee on Education:

We represent the Education Reform Now Advocacy Coalition of Milwaukee. We bring together education, business, civic and community leaders, MPS parents and activists to voice our support for Senate Bill 405 authored by Senator Lena Taylor and Representative Pedro Colon. This legislation is a significant and necessary first step in resolving the Milwaukee Public Schools crisis.

The facts are undisputed:

60% of MPS 10th Graders are not proficient in Reading.

70% of MPS 10th Graders are not proficient in Math.

Wisconsin has the LARGEST racial achievement gap in the country, and it continues to grow. Recent NAEP (National Assessment of Education Progress) scores show that the situation gets worse every year.

MPS is not educating children. The current leadership has been unable or unwilling to create transformative change. We need a single, elected point of accountability. Milwaukee needs an education leader with the vision, expertise and authority to turn this district around. SB 405 creates that accountability and opens the door for Milwaukee's Mayor to find that education visionary that can lead the Milwaukee Public Schools into a much brighter future.

We applaud Senator Taylor and Representative Colon and their colleagues in both Houses for advancing this legislation. We were pleased that Governor Doyle called a Special Session beginning on December 16, 2009. Now we respectfully ask that legislative leadership allow SB 405 to move forward.

Delay is no longer an option. The education crisis in Milwaukee is crippling the city, and all indicators show the situation is getting worse. We understand the political and process issues that accompany change of this magnitude are significant, but the politics of adults has held the kids of Milwaukee prisoner for too long already.

Ron SanFellipo
Former President
Milwaukee Public Schools Board

Ron Sadoff

Katina Shaw
Parent
Milwaukee Public Schools

James C. Rowe

Steve and Barbara Anderson





Metropolitan Milwaukee
Association of Commerce

TESTIMONY IN FAVOR OF SB 405
Steve Baas, Government Affairs Director
Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce
January 5, 2010

The Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce (MMAC) represents nearly 2000 businesses employing over 300,000 workers in the metropolitan Milwaukee area. To survive and compete in an increasingly competitive global economy our members need a workforce composed of world class talent. While some of that talent can be recruited from outside the region, the long-term sustainability of our economy is impossible unless we are capable of “growing our own” in terms of our workforce.

We support SB 405 because the status quo in MPS – our region’s largest workforce provider – is broken. Simply put, the current performance of MPS is not consistent with our economic competitiveness goals nor sufficient to adequately meet our workforce needs.

To anyone who doubts dramatic change is necessary I urge you to consider our present situation:

- There are more adults in the city of Milwaukee without a high school degree than there are with a college degree, 21% and 20% respectively.
- For the last 5 MPS high school classes, fewer than 50% of the students enrolling as freshmen start their senior year four years later.
- MPS ranks 47th out of the nation’s 50 largest public school systems for graduation rates.
- The gap between white and black students in math and reading proficiency is the highest in the nation amongst urban school districts. Only 6% of MPS eighth-graders score at or above proficient in math.
- In the next 5 years, spending commitments are likely to cause MPS to plead bankruptcy.

We simply cannot continue to produce these sorts of results. Our city, its future potential, and its economic prosperity will continue to shrink if we do not improve the educational performance of MPS students. Current practice and past history suggests that change will not come from a school system that lacks accountability, is distracted from its focus, poorly manages its people and its resources, and has no broadly elected mandate to lead.

While we would prefer that SB 405 went even further than it does, we believe it is an acceptable compromise that will take important steps toward improving the MPS in the following ways:

1. **Accountability:** The Mayor is the most visible elected official in the city. K-12 education is the most important public service provided in the city. Making the Mayor accountable for the quality of education in the city clearly links governance to the electorate. It demonstrates the city’s willingness to actually make education the priority our leaders so often say it is.

2. **Authority:** To be responsible for school performance, you need the authority to hire, fire, and manage resources. Giving a Superintendent directly reporting to the Mayor the authority to manage the school system connects accountability with authority. The current system blurs lines of authority and thereby is not accountable. This lack of accountability leads to poor management, complex work rules, and an inconsistent strategy.

3. **Performance:** The bottom line for making any change in the governance of MPS is to improve educational performance. If you cannot make a difference in the interaction of the teacher and student to improve educational attainment, then the result is only the illusion of change. Mayoral governance gives MPS a better chance of making this difference because it empowers the Superintendent. It would provide for real management of the working relationship with teachers and schools. It will reform the current bureaucratic collective bargaining and system where contracts are set by the deliberations of nine board members operating in relative anonymity. And it holds the promise of finally reforming and replacing a personnel management system long on tenure and short on performance evaluations.

We make this recommendation for change with the full knowledge of the variety of challenges facing MPS and its families. High rates of teenage pregnancy and large tracks of poverty do bring real problems into the schools. Mayoral governance is no silver bullet for turning around school performance. It is merely a necessary first step. This change must be coupled with a commitment to recruit and retain the highest quality educators and school leaders. It must also be accompanied by a comprehensive effort to engage parents in their child's school. It is our judgment, however, that if it is used well the mayoral control authority proposed in SB 405 is far better than the existing system of governance, which seems paralyzed to make any of these significant positive changes.

There are almost 120,000 Milwaukee students served by a publicly funded schools through MPS, independent charter schools, and schools participating in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program. A viable system where dollars follow the choices of parents and students to high performing schools remains the key to improving educational outcomes. Strengthening all of these choices in Milwaukee remains a top priority for MMAC. We support the change to mayoral governance of MPS because we believe it has the prospects for strengthening the quality of the choices within the Milwaukee Public Schools.

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SB 405?

January 5, 2009

2010?

Dear Senator,

This Mayoral Takeover will not solve or improve our Public Schools on any level.

As part of a community and of valued Union membership I believe that the Mayor should reconsider his stand on a takeover.

Sincerely,
Cecilia Calles