



OFFICIAL PRESS STATEMENT

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Detroit Teachers Deserve Our Support, Not Our Retribution

DETROIT –We have gathered here because of the urgent crisis concerning the children of Detroit Public Schools, parents, teachers and our community as a whole. The recent events that have led to Detroit Public School teachers being forced to teach in conditions that are unique in their low-quality and desperate circumstance, cry out for all responsible adults and policy makers to act immediately to fix the Detroit Public Schools. Teachers did not go to college, earn advanced degrees, sacrifice time, money, and families, to become civil rights leaders or social agitators. They went to school to learn how to provide a quality education and a solid academic future for our children. Yet due to a state governmental process led by an Emergency Manager, established by the Governor of the State, and supported by a State Legislature, education in the city of Detroit as well as in other communities has almost come to a standstill. When all else has failed, our teachers in Detroit have been forced to speak up and to stand up for our children. Teachers in the city of Detroit have had their pay cut, health care sliced, loaned earned time to the Detroit Public Schools to help facilitate budgetary reductions, while compelled to teach in overcrowded classrooms, work in buildings with low heat or no heat, leaky roofs, mold on walls, inadequate resources, with indifferent policy makers who have failed to act.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said:

*“Human progress is neither automatic nor inevitable...
every step toward the goal of justice requires sacrifice, suffering, and struggle;
the tireless exertions and passionate concern of dedicated individuals.”*

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Our teachers should be applauded, not condemned. They should be supported, not deported to a system of retribution and punishment for actions designed to shine a light on a very socially dim and politically ugly situation. There have been constant efforts by local leaders, faith leaders, educators, business people, and in some cases some political leaders, to call upon the Governor and the State Legislature to fix this problem. There have been attempts to get the Emergency Financial Manager of the Detroit Public Schools to address the concerns of Detroit teachers. This has not occurred in a timely and efficient manner. Just as President Obama on Wednesday indicated that, *“if he were a parent living in the city of Flint, he would be beside himself that my child’s health is at risk.”* Our teachers are beside themselves in the City of Detroit because educational excellence is at risk and is not currently being provided to the children in our community. We call upon the State Legislature to act now to provide financial resources for the Detroit Public Schools to stop the bleeding of teachers and students. We stand with the Detroit Legislative Delegation and the Coalition for the Future of Detroit School Children to bring forth a real solution to the crisis of education in the city of Detroit. We call upon the state of Michigan and the Governor to act now to provide new leadership for the school district of the city of Detroit. We cannot have a pure Michigan with an impure school system. We cannot have a healthy and productive community, while others are forced to bathe and are daily served poisonous water, when we live in the Great Lakes Region of the world, surrounded by one quarter of the world’s fresh water.

We as Ministers, Pastors and parents of this community ask the people of Detroit and surrounding communities to remember the tragedy of Flint so that it will never happen again. Remember the tragedy of the Detroit Public Schools so it too cannot ever happen again. We support the legitimate leadership of the Detroit Federation of Teachers. We say to the Emergency Manager as well as to the Governor and the State Legislators, do not take punitive action against Detroit teachers who are simply taking positive actions concerning their plight, so that they can get back into classrooms of quality with the tools and resources that they need in order to teach our children. If State Senator Phil Pavlov of the 25th district of Michigan has not introduced any legislation that would punish the Governor, State Legislators and all others responsible for the water deaths of children in Flint and the educational demise of children in Detroit then he should not be presenting legislation (SB713-15) to punish teachers for standing up for our children. Certainly not when so many others have chosen to stand down against. Now is not the time to punish. Now is not the time to beat down. Now is the time to lift up. We stand united as concerned Ministers, Pastors and parents in the city of Detroit over the current crisis of education in our city and in the crisis of water in the city of Flint. I wish to acknowledge those Pastors who are in support of these concerns but who could not be here at this time. Among them are:

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- Rev. Dr. James Perkins, President of the Progressive National Baptist Convention
- Rev. Dr. Tellis Chapman, President Baptist Missionary and Educational State Convention
- Bishop Charles H. Ellis III, Presiding Bishop of the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World
- Rev. Dr. Robert Brumfield, Pastor Oak Grove AME Zion Church
- Bishop J. Drew Sheard, Prelate of North Central Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction of Michigan
- Bishop P.A. Brooks, First Assistant Presiding Bishop Prelate MI Northeast Church of God and Christ
- Rev. Dr. Solomon Kinloch, Triumph Church Ministries
- Bishop Edgar Vann, Second Ebenezer Church Edgar Vann Ministries and many others...

For more information on the Detroit Branch NAACP please call (313) 871-2087 or visit www.detroitnaacp.org.

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