



## WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

P.O. BOX 8952 • MADISON, WI 53708

Chris Abele, County Executive  
901 N. 9th Street, Room 306  
Milwaukee County Courthouse  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53233

May 11, 2016

County Executive Abele,

As you know, in the 2015-17 state budget, the Republican-led Legislature pushed through a provision, the Opportunity Schools and Partnership Programs (OSPP), to privatize schools within the Milwaukee Public School (MPS) system. These schools are to be run by an unelected commissioner appointed by you, the Milwaukee County Executive. Knowing this proposal would limit the voices of neighbors and take away their say in the future of MPS, several members of the Milwaukee Democratic delegation, along with parents throughout the Milwaukee School District, voiced strong opposition to this proposal.

At the last MPS Board meeting, Dr. Demond Means, the individual you appointed to be the OSPP Commissioner, announced he will proceed with the plan and remove several schools from the authority of the democratically-elected MPS Board. This directly contradicts previous statements he has made, as well as claims you have made yourself, regarding your original intentions to distance yourselves from the full implementation of the takeover scheme. In addition to these contradictions, Commissioner Means has indicated that he alone will oversee the acquisition of these schools, and will independently award millions of taxpayer dollars to non-MPS charter schools, leaving our neighbors without representation or voice in the process.

In his presentation to the Board, Dr. Means has laid out a scenario in which several of our public schools would be converted into non-MPS charter institutions, outside the authority of district administrators and unaccountable to our democratically-elected school Board. In this plan, Dr. Means ignored the positive advances MPS has made in its partnership with Milwaukee United Way to create an effective community school model. He instead offered a dampened version of wraparound services that would rely on private donors for funding. This reliance on private donors is key to the discussion because, as Commissioner Means did acknowledge, the Legislature failed to create a dedicated funding source for this takeover process.

As pointed out during the budget deliberations, this ill-conceived plan is yet another state-imposed program that takes resources away from Milwaukee's public schools. We already see a significant funding gap among school districts in Wisconsin; this plan will worsen this inequality and force MPS to do even more with significantly less.

Another problem with your takeover plan is that the Milwaukee Public School District would be required to continue to administer employment services for the schools taken over by the County. You and Dr. Means have given no clear indication, though, whether the teaching professionals currently employed at the proposed takeover schools would be able to keep their jobs, salary level, or benefits, leaving us to wonder if you are creating a second-tier system that would ultimately force these dedicated educators to leave their positions. At a time when Milwaukee and Wisconsin are hemorrhaging qualified and experienced teaching staff, we cannot afford to exacerbate the problem by continuing to devalue and destabilize our educational workforce.

Overall, the inability of Commissioner Means and yourself to provide clear and concise details about how this takeover will transpire tells us one thing: you should leave all of Milwaukee's public schools under the administration of their democratically-elected School Board and District Superintendent Driver. We could then all continue to work within the current system to improve our schools and retain the democratic spirit of local governance, without resorting to a unilateral takeover that silences our neighbors and further harms an already fragile school district.

Please seriously reconsider your plans regarding this course of action. We believe that the best option for compliance with respect to the takeover law would be to utilize an empty facility and work with existing MPS partners to develop a true community school. We hope you will, after review, realize that this course, as well as your original intention to proceed in a hands-off manner regarding MPS, are the better decisions.

Sincerely,



Rep. Christine Sinicki  
20<sup>th</sup> Assembly District

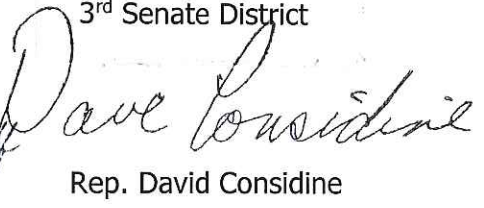
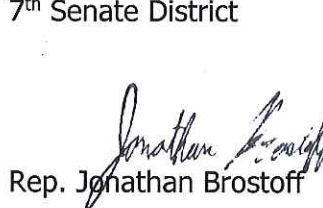


Sen. Chris Larson  
7<sup>th</sup> Senate District

Sen. Tim Carpenter  
3<sup>rd</sup> Senate District

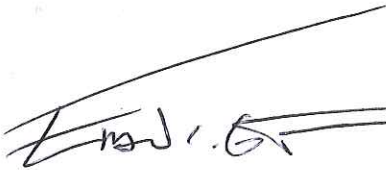


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77<sup>th</sup> Assembly District



Rep. Jonathan Brostoff  
19<sup>th</sup> Assembly District

Rep. David Considine  
81<sup>st</sup> Assembly District



Rep. Evan Goyke  
18<sup>th</sup> Assembly District



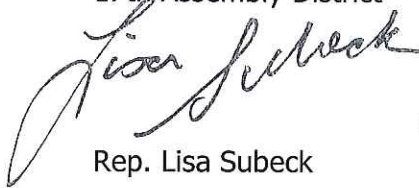
Rep. LaTonya Johnson  
17<sup>th</sup> Assembly District



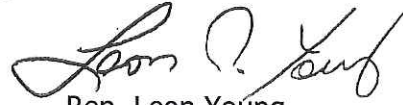
Rep. Mandela Barnes  
11<sup>th</sup> Assembly District



Rep. Tod Ohnstad  
65<sup>th</sup> Assembly District



Rep. Lisa Subeck  
78<sup>th</sup> Assembly District



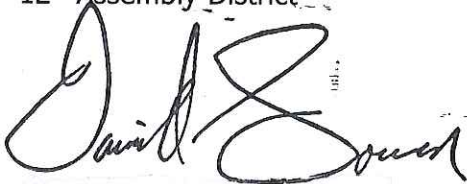
Rep. Leon Young  
16<sup>th</sup> Assembly District



Rep. Daniel Riemer  
7<sup>th</sup> Assembly District



Rep. Fred Kessler  
12<sup>th</sup> Assembly District



Rep. David Bowen  
10<sup>th</sup> Assembly District

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