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Charter Schools to the Ku Klux Klan**

LANSING, Michigan (January 3, 2012) – The Michigan Association of Public School Academies expressed outrage today after an anti-school-choice group in Michigan used its Facebook page to link charter schools to the Ku Klux Klan.

Michigan Parents for Schools, an Ann Arbor-based group headed by Executive Director Steven Norton, put a link on its Facebook page on Sunday to an article from the Knights of the KKK's official Web page. The KKK article carried the headline "Segregated Charter Schools Evoke Separate But Equal Era in U.S.," and tried to advance the discredited claim that charter schools promote segregation. The Michigan group's Facebook page also carried a retweet that said "KKK supports charters b/c they further segregation."

Norton and his group have been at the forefront of the anti-charter movement in Michigan in recent months. Norton – who also personally posted a link to the KKK story on Facebook – testified before the House Education Committee on Nov. 2 in opposition to SB 618, which removed the arbitrary cap on charter schools in Michigan. He also testified before the Senate Education Committee in September.

"This is sickening," said Dan Quisenberry, President of the Michigan Association of Public School Academies (MAPSA), the state charter school association. "There are 255 public charter schools in our state that are simply trying to do the best job they can of educating their students, and this group has the audacity to link them to the KKK. It's beyond insulting, and it's beyond outrageous. Instead of engaging in a reasonable discussion about the future of education in our state, they resort to this. They compare charter schools to the Ku Klux Klan. Unbelievable. It's obvious that they have no shame."

As for the supposed claims that charter schools are more segregated than traditional public schools, Quisenberry pointed out that when it comes to the composition of the student bodies, charter schools reflect the communities in which they're located. Charter schools are open to any eligible student in Michigan, and like all public schools, are not allowed to discriminate on any basis.



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“The claim itself has absolutely no merit,” Quisenberry said. “The fact that Steven Norton’s group is relying on the Ku Klux Klan for its information tells you everything you need to know. This is how desperate they’ve become. It’s just sad and pathetic.”

Quisenberry called on the Michigan Parents for Schools leadership to apologize for the posting.

The Michigan Association of Public School Academies (MAPSA) has been the unified voice of the public charter school movement in Michigan since 1996. MAPSA represents more than 110,000 students, 5,000 teachers, dozens of authorizers and more than 50 education service providers working in 255 public charter schools in the state. MAPSA assists the state's public charter schools in their mission to deliver achievement, choice and accountability through advocacy, communications, technical assistance and professional development services. For additional information, please visit www.charterschools.org.