

# **Michigan Parents for Schools**

*Parents working for excellent public schools*

*— for our children, our communities, and our future.*

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **MIPFS Rebukes Charter School Advocacy Group for "Manufactured" News Item that Misdirects the Public**

Ann Arbor, MI (4 January 2012) — Michigan Parents for Schools today rebuked a charter school interest group for a press release that distorts MIPFS's record and misdirects public attention from the critical issues surrounding charter schools.

Reached while traveling with his family, MIPFS Executive Director Steven Norton reacted strongly to the press release from the Michigan Association of Public School Academies: "To say that we 'compare charter schools to the Ku Klux Klan' is both absurd and insulting to anyone who has worked in the civil rights movement. We have been calling attention to the legitimate concerns parents have with recent legislation on charter schools. MAPSA's allegations that we are linking charter schools to the KKK is a sad attempt to divert our attention from these real issues."

MIPFS, a non-profit public interest advocacy group supporting public education, has been active in opposing recent legislation that would remove most limits from charter schools (public school academies) and create new classes of such schools in Michigan. The organization's main objections to the legislation focus on the negative financial impact on local public schools; the fragmentation of public education into small enclaves that are not accountable to the local community; and the prevalence of for-profit companies which manage most Michigan charters, raising the concern that profits may be put ahead of children's education. Norton notes that MIPFS does not oppose charter schools in principle but wants to keep the focus on supporting local public schools and giving them the tools and resources they need to offer a quality education to all students.

Some days ago, MIPFS decided to redistribute (via Twitter and its FaceBook page) a Twitter message from a national education advocate which pointed to a posting on a web site apparently sponsored by a faction of the KKK, the notorious white-supremacist group. The posting on the KKK-sponsored site made reference to a separate news article about charter schools, and spoke approvingly of the opportunity charter schools gave families to select "schools with a student population that reflects the race of [their]

children." The posting continued: "Why does this make some social engineers so angry? It is only natural. Each race should have the right to determine their own affairs without interference.... And parents who choose charter schools for their children based upon this fact are doing so instinctually and its healthy for their families." [sic]

Norton is firm about the decision to redistribute the Twitter message and link: "The whole point of this was to underline our concern that Michigan's decision to encourage charter schools at the expense of local, community-governed public schools ran the risk of creating many separate educational enclaves, perhaps even re-segregating our schools. The fact that this vile group welcomes just such an outcome highlights an issue that deserves greater discussion. I included the link to the actual site to allow others to confirm these findings first-hand, despite my concerns that this might somehow benefit the operators of that web site."

"If this were not such an important issue to our communities and state, I would never have risked lending any sort of legitimacy or even a public platform for these groups that have destroyed the lives of so many and poisoned the politics of our nation for more than a century," Norton added.

Over the last few years, concerns have been growing about the possible segregation being introduced by school choice programs in the US. Not long ago, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) passed a resolution expressing concern about charter schools, partly for that very reason. 1/ Academic research on national trends indicated that segregation by race, income and ability level has already occurred, though policy changes could remedy this. 2/

Norton says that an open discussion of this and other issues in public education is desperately needed. "It's unfortunate that we get this kind of manufactured news item instead," he said.

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Copies of MIPFS testimony on the charter school package, their issue briefing on the bills in that package, and other position papers and articles can be found on their web site: <http://www.mipfs.org>.

Notes:

1. The NAACP resolution can be found here:  
[http://naacp.3cdn.net/ec6459eda5247ea257\\_d1m6bxsf6.pdf](http://naacp.3cdn.net/ec6459eda5247ea257_d1m6bxsf6.pdf)
2. See for example: Mickelson, R.A., Bottia, M., Southworth, S. (2008). School Choice and Segregation by Race, Class, and Achievement. Boulder, CO: National Education Policy Center. Available here:  
<http://nepc.colorado.edu/publication/school-choice-and-segregation-race-class-and-achievement>