

A bold new beginning for the struggle to defend public education in Detroit . . .

In January 2015, the Detroit Federation of Teachers elected a new President, Steve Conn, and embarked upon a courageous struggle to save Detroit's public schools and community from an ongoing political assault. For most of the last fifteen years, a hostile state takeover has ruled over the Detroit school system, with the aim of destroying public education and imposing a regime of cheap, second-class charter schools. Described as "ground zero" by the U.S. Secretary of Education, Detroit's public schools transformed into a wasteland of abandoned buildings under the weight of the attack. Thousands of students and families fled the district and moved out of the city to seek an education. Not since the old Jim Crow had Detroit witnessed such a mass migration of black Americans to escape from the degrading conditions of segregation and inequality — only this time the migration was an exodus.

Detroit's remaining public school teachers rallied together behind Steve Conn and the Equal Opportunity Now/By Any Means Necessary Caucus (EON/BAMN), seeking to rebuild their union to fight to save the one real hope for the future of the city: public education. The documents contained within this pamphlet give a glimpse within that struggle. What follows are the public statements of Steve Conn and EON/BAMN during the first semester of his term as union president. They begin with the following words: "The struggle for our union is, and must be, a civil rights struggle for the people of Detroit." We call upon all defenders of public education to join us in making this fight. Together, we can win.

Detroit Federation of Teachers' President Steve Conn and the
Equal Opportunity Now/By Any Means Necessary (EON/BAMN) Caucus

"First Semester"

Public Statements from January 5 to June 5, 2015

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ELECT FOR PRESIDENT OF THE DETROIT FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

STEVE CONN

To my colleagues and friends,

The struggle for our union is, and must be, a civil rights struggle for the people of Detroit. Our school district is among the most racially segregated education systems in the nation. Our students largely live in poverty, and the schools that we share are impoverished schools: overcrowded, dilapidated, and starved of essential resources. Our community members have virtually no real voting rights, as both the school system and the city have endured hostile state takeovers. When our students arrive at school, they depend upon each of us individually to provide for them what their world seems so determined to take away—real hope for the future. But because their future will develop out of the unjust conditions in which we live and work, we cannot afford to view our tasks in a narrow, individualistic manner. Our collective strength, our union, must take direct aim at those unjust conditions, and our union leadership must advance a program for real progress in Detroit. For that purpose, I ask for your vote in the election of the Detroit Federation of Teachers.

During the past fifteen years, the Detroit schools have weathered what felt like a hurricane of disastrous schemes by dictator-reformers, privatizing businessmen, and charlatan education wizards. The result has left many of the schools looking as though an actual hurricane had struck the city, while the surviving buildings serve as overburdened shelters for the displaced masses. So many “plans” have come and gone, each possessing the same general features: (1) vacuous corporate jargon about “accountability” and “performance,” etc.; (2) financial tyranny, plundering public funds into private enterprises and bloating administrative expenditures, while slashing the budget for everything essential to education; (3) high-stakes, standardized testing to punish students and teachers alike, with creativity and critical thinking being replaced by rote memorization and scripted test preparation; and (4) blaming and attacking the teachers—and specifically teachers’ unions—as scapegoats for the planned destruction of public education. Enough! It is time for the *real* experts on education and the *real* champions of student achievement—the *teachers*—to step forward as a leadership with a positive program for real hope.

I submit my candidacy as a step towards that progress. I realize that the obstacles are immense, that our union is in terrible disrepair, and that the road ahead is long and difficult. But I am not deterred by great challenges. After all, I am a Detroit teacher.

—Steve Conn

BUILDING THE FIGHT FOR DETROIT’S FUTURE: A PLAN OF ACTION

If elected, I pledge to hold a mass membership meeting at which we can vote on a plan of action for the DFT and reestablish the democratic decision-making and membership control of our union. It is necessary to rebuild our union and our capacity to defend ourselves and our community—we cannot afford to chain ourselves to the Keith Johnson/Edna Reaves regime or their methods. Honest discussion and healthy debate will be necessary, particularly given the absence of those features in the DFT under Johnson and Reaves. My initial proposals for that discussion can be summarized as follows:

I. RENEW THE STRUGGLE FOR INTEGRATION AND EQUALITY IN AMERICA—WE DEFEND THE TRADITION OF *BROWN V. BOARD OF EDUCATION*

A. Detroit is changing, as thousands of new residents are moving into the city while other residents are leaving. The influx creates opportunities for new resources for the schools, but it also creates the dangers of new mechanisms for segregation and for denying access to the black and Latino students. In Chicago and Boston, where the student populations are over 90% black and Latino, their cities’ flagship schools are over 90% white and Asian. Detroit policy makers are



Teacher, Father, Union Leader, and Civil Rights Activist

I am running for president of our union because I still believe in the same truth that led me to become a DPS teacher nearly thirty years ago: I believe in the great potential of the young people of Detroit.

I have taught math in the Detroit Public Schools since 1986, and served as DFT building representative at Cass Tech since 1991. Throughout my teaching career, as anyone who knows me can attest, I have lived by the motto of Frederick Douglass: “If there is no struggle, there is no progress.”

My activism in BAMN (By Any Means Necessary), founded in 1995, has given me the possibility to contribute to what I believe is urgently necessary for progress in our city and our nation: youth leadership for the building of a new civil rights movement.

That activism enabled my involvement in some of the most important legal cases for our students’ education. I became a plaintiff in the lawsuit against the first state takeover of the Detroit schools (1999), and was part of BAMN’s student-intervenor defense of affirmative action programs in the Supreme Court case, *Grutter v. Bollinger*.

My wife, Heather Miller, is also a well-known DPS teacher and activist. We are both longtime residents of Detroit. Together, we have raised a wonderful daughter, Edith, who has attended schools in DPS throughout her education. As a student leader, Edith gave a speech on the steps of the Supreme Court during the hearing of *Schuetz v. BAMN*; she spoke to defend the educational opportunities of herself and her peers. I gain strength from her hopes and dreams for the world that we share.

EON/BAMN

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already planning how to achieve the same form of apartheid here. Our union must demand *integration* and *quality education* for all students.

B. Detroit students are being locked out of the top universities in the state. Black student enrollment at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, has plummeted to 3.8%, the lowest level since 1970. At the same time, however, the University of Michigan also runs the Detroit School of Arts, and other colleges and universities either own or seek to own stakes in charter programs. It is unconscionable for institutions of higher education to operate and profit from charter schools while denying those students any reasonable chances of gaining admission to their universities. Detroit students are just as talented and deserving as anyone else—we must demand *equal college opportunities* for our students.

C. Abolish the takeover regimes—restore the democratic rights of minority communities. The only reason to take control out of the hands of Detroit residents is for tyrants to impose policies that the voters would never accept voluntarily. That has been the exact result. The touted objects of the takeovers, quality of education and financial management, have in fact become much worse. Their unspoken, actual object has been to dismantle public education and to drive out thousands of black families from the city of Detroit.

II. DEFEND PUBLIC EDUCATION—STOP THE PRIVATIZED ROBBERY OF OUR SCHOOLS

A. The charter school experiment has failed miserably; it has ravaged our public schools, and yet the charters still cannot compete in spite of that devastation. We cannot allow one more cent of public money to go towards exploiting our students as guinea pigs for private profit.

B. In order to restore public accountability and regain what was lost, we must *unionize the charter school teachers*. By unionizing and building struggles for better teaching conditions in charter schools, we can pull the profit-based “business advantage” of charters out from under their feet. We must fight for a single DFT contract for all public and charter school teachers; the evacuation of the corporate predators and the restoration of public, democratic control to the charters will be the result.

C. Abolish the EAA system and return the buildings and resources to DPS.

III. REBUILD THE DETROIT FEDERATION OF TEACHERS TO FIGHT FOR THE BEST QUALITY CONDITIONS FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

A. Our students (and teachers!) desperately need *smaller class size*. But the takeover regimes only achieve this by packing the classrooms so excessively as to force thousands of students out of their schools and out of the district. A true policy of small class size requires *more teachers, more classrooms, and more schools*. (“Small schools,” or multiple schools in one building, are merely a deception to parents who assume that this provides better individual attention; in reality, such schools only multiply the number of administrators, reducing the funds available for teaching and other necessities.)

B. Increase salaries for all teachers and support staff; unfreeze the steps. Reject all mechanisms for binding teacher pay and employment to student test scores; such policies only punish at-risk, disadvantaged, and learning-disabled students along with the most compassionate teachers who dedicate themselves to this challenging work.

C. The DFT must organize the election and training of building representatives in every school. Building reps should be capable of defending teachers against (1) principal harassment, (2) encroachments upon academic freedom, and (3) the favoritism and forced relocation by the administration-controlled “evaluation system”—with the full weight of union leadership behind every building rep.

D. Our students need more counselors, social workers, speech therapists, college admissions specialists and other support staff.

E. We demand a daily prep hour for all teachers, including elementary and middle school teachers.

F. A modern, liberal arts education requires adequate text books, up-to-date technology, hands-on experiences, and creative arts and music programs. We cannot accept the cheap, second-class, narrow-minded regime any longer.

Out with the Keith Johnson/Edna Reaves Regime

Under the Keith Johnson/Edna Reaves leadership of the DFT, the union has deteriorated, capitulated, and fundamentally ceased to function as a union.

Johnson and Reaves presided over the decimation of our union membership—we have suffered a 60% loss of strength numerically. Throughout the attrition, as schools closed down and teaching conditions sank to new depths, their leadership would only recite to us the same old lines, “There is no money,” “There is nothing we can do,” “We need to balance the budget first,” etc. We have heard those lines before, recited to us by every takeover administrator and every state official before there ever was a takeover. There has never been enough money, *and there will never, ever be enough money*, as long as the union leadership does not demand it and will not fight for it.

Johnson and Reaves have been the allies of the attackers of public education in Detroit, courting them, even dancing arm-in-arm with them, serving as *their* representatives in our union. But their capitulation was not unprecedented. Booker T. Washington, and scores of leaders who came after him, also valued the expediency of consenting to every demand of the white politicians. The initial rationale can easily seduce the weary and the fearful: “perhaps if we can foster friendly relations with our oppressors, we might not suffer as badly as we would otherwise.” But once it becomes clear that the politicians cannot easily be swayed to pursue anything less than their full agenda, then the seductive rationale has failed—its servility has achieved nothing.

During my entire teaching career, I have represented the method of determined struggle, advocating the traditions of Frederick Douglass, W.E.B. DuBois, and Dr. King. In times of urgency, like now, hundreds of teachers have rallied to EON/BAMN’s leadership. Four years ago, I was defeated in the DFT election by only 41 votes, while hundreds of ballots were excluded from the count. The Johnson/Reaves leadership did not show any special concern for the integrity of union democracy then, and they could use the same methods now if left unchecked. Members should be vigilant and organized against voter fraud. If I am elected, Randi Weingarten and AFT officials will try to remove me or to paralyze the union with the aid of Johnson/Reaves backers. We should be neither cynical nor naive towards this—even though there are considerable corporate and political interests behind the attacks on our schools, there would not be so much consternation towards EON/BAMN leadership if there was no fear of our success. Let us have no such fear, either.

Press Release, January 18, 2015

Victory for Steve Conn and EON/BAMN in the Detroit Federation of Teachers—
Victory for the New Civil Rights Movement in the Struggle for Educational
Opportunity in Detroit

Teacher and Community Celebration and Action Meeting: (1) to implement the democratic decision of the teachers and secure the inauguration of Steve Conn against bureaucratic maneuvers, and (2) to launch the new presidency and organizing campaign. Scheduled Tuesday, January 20 at 4:00pm, located at 7700 2nd Ave., Detroit.

In a courageous stand for hope and progress in Detroit, teachers elected Steve Conn as president of the Detroit Federation of Teachers. This victory represents the initiation of a new period of civil rights struggle in Detroit, a bold challenge to the segregated and unequal conditions that have only worsened during the years of hostile takeovers. Fighting the ongoing trend of the decimation of the Detroit schools, the teachers are now poised more than ever before to defend the educational interests of the students, the teachers, and the entire city.

Statement by Steve Conn: “With great pride and urgency, I accept the mandate of the Detroit teachers to fight for the futures of our students and for the quality teaching and learning conditions that our city deserves. We will not accept the continued regime of deteriorating, second-class education. With the support of my fellow teachers, of our students, and our community, I believe that we can stand up for the real hope and progress that has long been denied. I believe that our impoverished city can have a bright future, because I know the great potential of the students I teach, and I know the deep compassion of the teachers with whom I work. My first action as president will be to organize a mass meeting—for Sunday, January 25—for teachers to discuss and vote on a program of action to rebuild the union and to save public education. Teachers are circulating petitions to call this historic meeting. I will work tirelessly to rebuild the Detroit Federation of Teachers, and to enable our union to stand up for the basic rights of our students and educators. The DFT ought to be a leading voice to champion the cause of educational opportunity, and as DFT president I pledge that our union will resolutely struggle for the resources and policies that our schools so desperately need.”

[Attached to this press release is the campaign literature with an outline of proposals for action.]

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STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS TO THE DETROIT FEDERATION OF TEACHERS
January 25, 2015

Fellow educators,

I have called us together for this meeting to address what I believe is the most urgent crisis in the history of our union and our public school system. Today, I hope to initiate a plan of action to confront that crisis, and I ask for your support in facing the monumental challenges in front of us. While our politicians are delivering speeches on the state of our nation, I wish to deliver an address on the state of our own union, and to tell the truth that our politicians will not admit.

Our lives as teachers are built upon our commitment to the young people of Detroit. We all embarked upon that commitment knowing that we would face great difficulties, but also believing in the possibility that our hard work could make a difference. Some of us are old survivors who chose to endure the many years of hardships. Others are new to the district, and have been tested from the very beginning by what are now some of the most degraded school conditions in the nation. All of us, young and old, live under the constant threat that our jobs could be the next to disappear and that our students could be further deprived of the few resources they have left. Many are here today seeking answers to what can be done.

My pledge to you today is not that we will find every answer or sweep aside all obstacles at once, but that we will begin a collective fight for our students and our schools—a fight to save public education, to save our union, and to realize the promise of hope and progress that our city truly deserves. I believe that our strength and our potential extend far beyond our own numbers, because the struggle for our union is united with the needs of our students and community. As I have said before, I will say again: the struggle for our union is, and must be, a civil rights struggle for the people of Detroit. We will not march alone.

In the week since my election as DFT president, I have made regular visits to schools and talked with many teachers about where we go from here. It was a pleasure to be greeted by the enthusiasm and smiles of old friends and new, and all of the teachers I met raised their own concerns and demands. Class size, job security, frozen pay, principal harassment, special education resources and ancillary services were regular topics. And although the challenges required to confront these issues are immense, there is clearly an awakening sentiment that something can be done. With your active leadership and support, yes, something *will* be done.

We find ourselves in the vortex of a national attack on public education. From Lansing to the White House, all of the nation's leading

policy makers advocate cutting resources from the public schools and diverting the funds towards charter school experiments. But the charter mania among the elite has not been shared by the rest of the population—out of the 49 million students attending schools that receive public funds, 96% of the students continue to attend traditional public schools; only 4% attend charters. In fact, in the few places where charter schools have become widespread, their introduction was foisted against the will of the local population. In places like Detroit and Oakland, the outright state takeover of the district was necessary in order to impose the new system.

The results have been catastrophic: in every charter-imposed district, the resource deficits have decimated the public schools, while the charters have underperformed their public counterparts in spite of every rigged financial advantage. Instead of benefitting from the supposed “market competition” between public and charter, the real outcome has been to lower the quality of education across the board. Teachers’ unions—which had been the traditional line of defense for public education—largely capitulated in the face of the attacks, causing membership numbers and morale to plummet. The advocates for greater resources for our most impoverished public schools are now mocked as “waiting for Superman”—we are told to accept the corporate schemes of Lex Luthor, instead.

This social experiment has long since failed in Detroit and in numerous other highly segregated, majority-black and Latino districts, and is now perpetuated only on the basis of completely circular arguments. They say that the takeover is needed to balance the budget, but when the takeover only makes financial matters worse, they say that this makes it necessary to continue the takeover. They say that the takeover is needed to improve academic performance, but when the takeover diminishes academic performance, they insist on applying the same bad remedy: more takeover. They say that charters are needed to innovate education, but when the charters only exacerbate the crisis of education, they say that this crisis necessitates the creation of more charters. They say that school closings and layoffs are necessary to eliminate the deficit, but when these policies force thousands of students to leave the district along with their per-pupil funding, we are then told that this requires even more school closings and more layoffs. For over fifteen years, we have weathered this continuous cycle of destruction. There is a common saying that the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results—we are living in a cyclone of insanity.

Our union can and must stand against this destructive cycle; the human cost is too high a price for our society to afford. In every seg-

regated school district where educational opportunities have crumbled, the claimed reduction in government spending has in fact been completely offset by the collateral expenses of social decay. In place of the obligation to invest in the futures of our young people, we have witnessed instead the counterposed investment in an increasingly militarized police force and a titanic prison industry. We have witnessed the proliferation of urban blight and unemployment. In places like Ferguson, Missouri, we have witnessed new urban uprisings, echoing the same social discontent that led to the Detroit upheaval in 1967 and many disturbances across the nation. Authorities tell us that we are too poor to invest in quality educational conditions; the reality is that we can't afford *not* to invest in the futures of our young people. Never again can we afford to accept the argument that there is not enough money. Either the nation will invest in teachers and text books, or it will pay a terrible price for urban warfare and destruction. Let us be a united voice for hope and progress.

Because we are educators, we also care deeply about the philosophy of the education system in which we work. We are practitioners of pedagogical theory, and earned our positions through careful study of the accumulated methods for facilitating learning. We cannot ignore the fact that the governing philosophy being imposed on our district is not based in any tested educational method, but instead derives from crude economics. The current regime is almost entirely based on the privatized, cheap and narrow schemes of the conservative economist Milton Friedman, rather than the proven science of traditional pedagogy. The cheap and narrow focus is not only a theory for reducing government spending, but it is also a theory about the position in society for which our students are being trained.

The current regime in Detroit has stripped from the schools nearly all humanities, creative arts and music programs—the hallmarks of a liberal arts education. In their place, technical and vocational training have taken priority. The theory of the regime has been to guide the hopes of students away from the attainment of a top university education, instead fixing their career paths towards lower-paying, less-educated sectors of the workforce. Even the prescribed teaching schemes cater to these backwards priorities, replacing creativity and critical thinking with rote memorization and scripted test preparation. In the EAA schools, many students barely receive any education at all—they spend all day in front of a computer screen, following mindless instructions like robots. Soaring class size also transforms schools into sweatshops, diverting attention away from learning and squandering time and energy on the taxing maintenance of discipline and order.

History teachers should recognize this regressive shift in priority as an extension of the philosophy of Booker T. Washington. Over one hundred years ago, Washington argued that the pursuit of full equality in black education had been an error. "It is at the bottom of life we must begin, and not at the top," he said. His pragmatist theory governed the Tuskegee education machine in the South, training young black men to enter only those occupations which were acceptable to the old Jim Crow system. Many thousands of black Americans fled the South, migrating to Northern cities like Detroit in search of better jobs and education. This was the origin of the black community that still resides in Detroit to this day. But now, in the face of a national wave of attacks on education, there is no North to which our community can escape. With our backs to the wall, our only choice today is to stand and fight.

If our community is to thrive, this will require restoring the promise of equal, quality education and Martin Luther King's dream of an integrated America. Education is the cornerstone of a democratic society. Education is the litmus test for the democratic principle of equal opportunity. Education ought to be a sacred obligation to the future of our young people, and not a tool for private profit for the benefit of today's robber barons. Our role is not simply to prepare our students for a career, but to enable our students to exercise their freedom and to pursue their happiness as equal, educated citizens. In order to fulfill that role, we must be better organized together to defend our students and ourselves.

I intend to rebuild our union from top to bottom. Among my first initiatives as your president, I will immediately begin the recruitment and training of building representatives at every school where there is a vacancy. I will work to ensure that teacher grievances receive effective responses, and I will commit the weight of union leadership to defend our representatives against all forms of principal harassment and subversion. Under my presidency, teacher grievances will no longer be swept under the rug; they will take priority and go to arbitration. Although our contract is weak, we can do much more to enforce its provisions that can offer some relief to our members. Building representatives will be trained to conduct grievance campaigns and rebuild teacher leadership in every building. Achieving smaller class size is absolutely critical—so many teachers labor under truly flagrant excesses, and this problem compromises teaching and learning throughout the district. The subjective and capricious evaluation system must also be challenged. Teachers must receive their evaluation results and fall teaching assignments before the end of the school year in June, with appeals to be heard immediately afterwards. I pledge to restore monthly meetings for our members, and to restore our union office as a pro-

fessional and functioning resource. I further intend to build organizing campaigns to bring the EAA and charter school teachers into the DFT, rebuilding our numbers and repairing the fragmented state of education. I intend to rebuild our active capacity such that, in the event that our members wish to use our most powerful weapon—the strike—we will be in a strong enough position to win.

At all times, I will maintain an unwavering connection to our students and community members, as well as to fellow union activists across the nation. It is my hope that we can serve as a national model for the defense of public education, inspiring teachers everywhere of the possibility to stand up for our schools.

Today is a new beginning for the Detroit Federation of Teachers. At a time when the very existence of our union is at stake, today is also the most important turning point in our union history. We face a difficult road ahead. I hope that today we can begin discussing and voting on a program of demands, and that our members can now thrive as active participants and leaders in a democratic decision-making process. I accept your mandate to lead this union to fight for the quality learning conditions that our students and teachers deserve. But I cannot succeed without your help. Join this fight, and together we can strive for the brightest future for the city we love.

Resolutions Adopted by the DFT Special Mass Membership Meeting, January 25, 2015

1. Resolved:

That the DFT will recruit and train building representatives in every school in which there is a vacancy; will train all building reps; will defend building representatives and all teachers against principal harassment; will restore effective grievance campaigns. [Passed Unanimously]

2. Resolved:

That the DFT demands that all members should receive their fall assignments and evaluation results before the end of the school year in June, and that appeals of any assignments and evaluations by the union will be heard by the district immediately thereafter. [Passed Unanimously]

3. Resolved:

That the DFT demands lower class size; competitive teacher salaries and unfrozen pay steps; daily lesson preparation periods for all teachers; books and supplies distributed in all classrooms to the satisfaction of the school DFT building reps and union committee. [Passed Unanimously]

4. Resolved:

That the DFT demands the restoration and expansion of music, art, physical education programs in all schools (ROTC is no substitute for phys ed) ; hiring of more social workers, psychologists, college admission and guidance counselors, hearing/speech therapists, school librarians, bilingual instructors, and other DFT support staff. [Passed Unanimously]

5. Resolved:

That the DFT demands state cancellation of the district debt; reincorporation of EAA and charters into DPS; an immediate end to state control of the district. [Passed Unanimously]

6. Resolved:

That the DFT will begin a union organizing drive at the EAA and charter schools as a first step towards reincorporating these schools into DPS. [Passed]

7. Resolved:

That the DFT leadership will deliver to the Governor, the Emergency Manager and the Coalition for the Future of Detroit Schoolchildren the union's resolutions. The DFT will mobilize the students, parents, and community of Detroit to fight to save our public education system. [Passed Unanimously]

8. Resolved:

The DFT also demands the elimination of the 2-hour staff meetings. [Passed Unanimously]

9. Resolved:

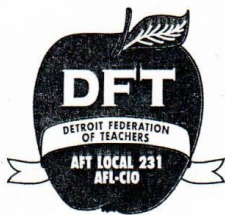
The DFT also demands that its building reps have union preparation times—one hour a day in schools with 50 or more members, and three hours a week in school with fewer than 50 members. [Passed Unanimously]

10. Resolved:

The DFT demands that principals submit to annual evaluations by their staff. [Passed Unanimously]

11. Resolved:

The DFT stands against excessive standardized testing and duplicate testing. [Passed Unanimously]



DETROIT FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

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DFT Special Membership Meeting

Sunday, March 29 at 3pm

IBEW Local 58 Union Hall, 1358 Abbot St., Detroit, MI 48226

(Entrance on Porter St. between Trumbull Ave. and John C Lodge Fwy)

Dear DFT Members,

More than 500 teachers signed petitions so that our second special mass union meeting could occur this Sunday, March 29. We urge teachers who signed the petition to come to the meeting themselves and to bring other teachers with them. Gov. Snyder and Emergency Manager Early know that my election as President of this union means that DFT members are sick of being abused and threatened and that we are willing to stand up, rebuild the strength of our union and use our power to give the young people of Detroit the first class education they deserve. What they need to see now—as we enter into our first real negotiations and battles with them since I was elected President of the union—is that our first strong, well-attended and successful mass meeting was not an anomaly. If the Sunday meeting is large and decisive, we can make this spring the first spring we have had in years in which teachers *win* and EM's and Governors learn to respect us and treat our members, our students and the city of Detroit with the dignity and equality we deserve.

On Wednesday, April 15, I will have my first face-to-face meeting with EM Early. What occurs at this meeting will be completely shaped by whether our second mass membership meeting is a success. Snyder and Early know that our first mass meeting was large and strong and that you gave me the support I needed to start rebuilding our union.

If Sunday's meeting builds on the success of our first mass meeting and paves the way for more mass meetings, it will send a message to all of the powers that DFT members have no intention of backing down or retreating. Simply getting a large turnout of members at Sunday's meeting will let Snyder and Early know that DFT members are done with the old routine of allowing our union officials to engage in well-choreographed sellouts with our enemies and then blame the membership for the union leadership's betrayals. Special mass meetings are the best vehicle for rebuilding our union's morale, courage and power.

It took Snyder and Early a little bit of time to

launch their counter-offensive against our show of strength. In part, they wanted to see if the change at the top of the union was only cosmetic and if the strength of our first mass meeting truly represented the direction teachers wanted our union to go in. They hoped that our union would be paralyzed by the passive, weak and bureaucratic norms of the past. Our pickets, building representative trainings, grievance campaign, victory at Marquette, and my constant organizing and presence in DPS schools have shown Snyder and Early that our union will not be governed by the terrible norms of the past and is prepared to move forward on the basis of policies and practices designed to moralize and strengthen the rank and file of our union. Snyder and Early intend to test our metal now with a new set of proposed attacks. If we stand strong and provide Detroit with the leadership it needs to win, we can hand Snyder his first significant defeat and force Early to leave now.

This year, unlike the past, we need to walk into the meeting with Early with our own agenda that we have already garnered public support for. We do not need to wait to hear what Early has to say to plan our response; we know what Early is planning to say at the April 15 meeting because the basic script is always the same. We have years of experience with the spring meetings with EM's. So long as an EM continues to run DPS, we can predict that this year's plan—like all the plans of the last two decades—will call for more degradation of DPS and more union concessions.

What we can change this year is to make clear that our union intends to fight rather than accept more concessions; we will no longer accept as a foregone conclusion that Early has the power to act on his ultimatums or doomsday scenarios. Sunday is our opportunity to discuss and vote on a plan of action to defeat Early's proposal. Among other things, we need to make clear that the DFT president is barred from making any secret backroom deals—I will not blindfold our membership.

Early wants the April 15 meeting to be a private

tête-à-tête. He has already restricted attendance at the meeting to me, my lawyer, possibly other DPS union presidents and their lawyers, and himself and his lawyer. Early will have his lawyer make the case that we have no legal grounds to fight on. His lawyer will cite the many anti-union laws championed by Snyder and a new set of terrible anti-union court decisions to contend that Early is doing us a favor by even meeting with me at all. Early is already refusing to hear second step grievances or to negotiate over teacher suspensions or discharges. He will even threaten not to recognize our union unless we submit to becoming a company union with no rights and little power.

This year, my lawyer at the meeting will be BAMN national chairperson Shanta Driver, the person known for winning cases that everyone else believes are sure losers. Former EM Rob Bobb stated publicly that the worst moment of his life was having to testify in the case that BAMN brought against him. Driver is one of a tiny handful of black women to argue before the U.S. Supreme Court, and she is not going to be impressed by some arrogant hack interpretation of the law or threats by Early.

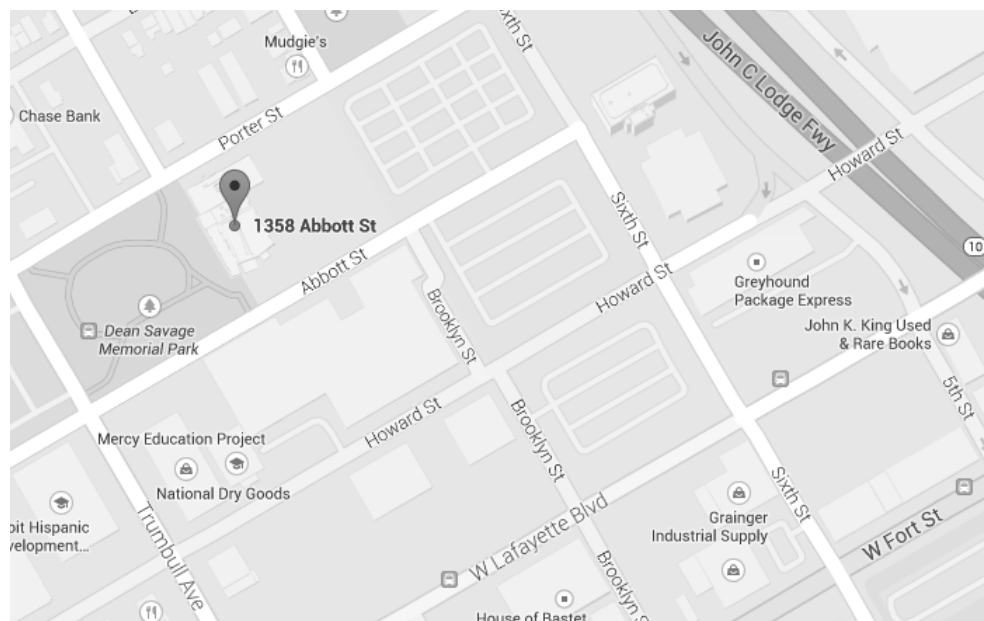
Early hopes that he can get me to cower before him and act like my predecessor, Keith Johnson. Keith left every one of these spring meetings thinking about how to present his betrayal as a victory. Over the years, he perfected the art of demoralizing teachers and reinforcing every fear of fighting that most teachers feel at some point to get teachers to vote against their conscience and interests. I was elected because teachers want to stand up. The lie that to "save our union" we had to destroy it was defeated by the truth that we can win if we are prepared to take militant action, including voting to strike. We begin the fight this spring on so much stronger footing—this is why we can win.

Finally, if Early senses defeat he will look for some union official to make a deal with him. Probably he seeks out some union official whose only real concern is collecting members' dues money. It would be easy for Early to offer to continue dues check-off in exchange for the DFT accepting more school closings, layoffs, worse working conditions and becoming a company union. When this "compromise" fails, Gov. Snyder will start floating the idea of a complete takeover of DPS. In truth, all of these schemes are easy to defeat if we decide on Sunday that we are going to fight to win.

This spring, our union will face its biggest challenge to date. We must continue to build a fighting new leadership for our union. We must continue to hold regular mass meetings. Snyder and Early want to attack us hard now because they fear that if we continue on our current course we only grow stronger. We may not be able to determine the timetable or character of the attacks we will face, but we can determine the outcome of any battle we fight. We are rebuilding our union. We can work out a range of tactics to use to save DPS and our union. Our struggle is the only real effort to save Detroit. Everyone knows that a new, recycled version of the People Mover can never substitute for a first-rate public school district. We have support in Detroit, and every teacher in the country who has been forced to accept concessions and experienced attacks on their abilities and dignity will have our back. We can win and we can change history.

Steve Conn
DFT President

313-303-1996, sconn@dft231.com



Directions from John C Lodge Fwy S (connecting from I-96 E, I-94 E/W, or I-75 S towards downtown)
From the Lodge Fwy S, exit on Howard St, turn right on Howard, turn right on Sixth, turn left on Porter, IBEW entrance on left.

Directions from I-75 N (towards downtown)
From I-75 N, exit on Rosa Parks, turn right on Trumbull, turn left on Porter, IBEW entrance on right.

ADDRESS TO THE SECOND SPECIAL MASS MEMBERSHIP MEETING
March 29, 2015

Two months ago, our membership gathered together for a great meeting. Our purpose was to put this union back on its feet, to renew our collective struggle for the education of our students. Hundreds of teachers filled the convention hall, where we discussed and voted on key demands and a plan of action. In the weeks that followed, we began to test the strength of that mandate in practice. Today, it is my proud responsibility to report that your mass mobilization to that meeting achieved exactly what it needed to do—that this union is standing and fighting for the first time in years.

We are now gathered together again, and just in time, for what needs to be one of a series of mass mobilizations designed to turn the tide against the attack on public education. After two months of rebuilding and organizing, we are facing our first confrontations with Governor Snyder and Emergency Manager Earley, and they intend to test our resolve and our capacity to fight back. We should expect nothing less from them. But as teachers, we value being prepared and we know a few things about how to perform well on tests. We will not wait passively until the day of the exam—our continued action is the key to our success.

First, it is necessary to give a brief report on the activity since our last meeting. My first priorities have been to rebuild our union's ability to address your needs and grievances, or to put it more bluntly, to make this union start functioning like a union. I initiated the recruitment and training sessions for building representatives right away, and I have visited schools nearly every day in part to give my full support to these front-line defenders of the teachers. This is where things start to get interesting, because at every school that I visit, there are teachers looking to take initiatives and raise concerns of their own. These initiatives led to a campaign against tyrant principals, and DFT members have rallied at Mann, Marquette, and Clark to protest numerous abuses ranging from contract violations to corporal punishment to sexual harassment.

The rallies gained the active support of students, parents, and community members, as well as members of other unions who work in DPS buildings. This readiness to take action, combined with the popularity of our demands, has put the district on notice that the degradation of our schools will finally be challenged by the Detroit Federation of Teachers. At Marquette, some of the remedies actually preceded the formal grievance process, as the district fixed the leaking roof and assigned an extra teacher to reduce class size on the same day that we ral-

lied there. Other grievance battles will go through a protracted dispute. But for each and every case, our possibility of achieving victory is determined by our overall ability to mobilize our members and our community.

Governor Snyder and Emergency Manager Earley have kept a close watch on our progress, and for the past two months they have chosen the safe option of staying relatively quiet and keeping their work behind closed doors. That is about to change, and a new period of struggle over the future of Detroit schools is beginning now. For many years, the attack on our schools has relied upon every important institution—including our union—simply going along with the attack and never actually criticizing it for what it is. Virtually every political leadership, liberal and conservative, recites from the exact same script with words like “education reform” and “financial solvency.” Now is our chance to break the silence.

The fact is that there is no such thing as education reform in Detroit! And the financial matters only keep growing worse! The Snyder schools, otherwise known as EAA, do not even deserve to be called schools. There has never been a plan to save the education of Detroit students—there has only been a plan to destroy public education, to steal from children, to drive families out of their homes and out of their city, and to put the spoils in the pockets of rich people. That is all that has happened in practice, and yet somehow every major institution has lined up to declare that this rampant destruction is all part of a plan to achieve the exact opposite of what it is really doing. The emperor has no clothes, and yet all of the nobles only tell him how well-dressed he is. This is the shameful degree of compliance that has been required to allow rich businessmen to steal from the education of poor children. It is the plainest form of evil, and because they can never justify it, they must pretend they are doing something else, and must either bribe or threaten all other powers into acquiescence.

For these reasons, I must make the following full disclosure to all of our members: we are about to witness some of the most peculiar deceptions, bribes, and threats that we have ever seen. But the enemies of public education are going to witness exactly what they have sought to avoid: teachers, students and community members standing up against them. When this membership decided to stand up, the chains of conformity were broken, and Snyder and Earley have been discussing ever since then how to repair those chains and restore submission. Emergency Manager Earley has invited me, along with my attorney, Shanta Driver, to meet with him and his attorney, in just over two weeks from today, on Wednesday, April 15. He will come to that meeting with an agenda that has been prepared behind closed doors—I will come to

that meeting with the agenda that this membership voted on two months ago and distributed publicly. He will come to that meeting likely hoping to exploit the weaknesses of one man—but I do not intend to walk into that meeting as only one man. My responsibility is to represent the needs and interests of thousands. My responsibility is to represent you, and I am turning to *your* strength in order to make clear to Snyder and Earley, in terms that they can understand, that this will not be another year in which they can press their agenda with impunity.

There are some very predictable scenarios that could play out, one of which is the routine that Keith Johnson choreographed for years. In that routine, the Emergency Manager presents two options: the first is some sort of doomsday plan, which in this case could be just about anything from refusal to recognize the union to the complete liquidation of public schools in Detroit. The second option is a set of cutbacks and further degradations to the schools which do not sound quite as severe as the doomsday plan. Traditionally, the EM and Keith Johnson would conspire on how to browbeat the membership into accepting the second option for the sole reason that it is the lesser of two evils. In reality, there was only one overall plan to begin with, and the EM was simply finding the path of least resistance in order to get there. Keith Johnson loyally provided the path of *no* resistance, and helped the EM determine which cutbacks could be forced upon the members each year. In his meeting with me, I expect the EM to present some version of a doomsday plan—and given the invitation of lawyers, probably including legal threats—hoping that I will offer up some concessions and cutbacks that I would accept as a softer alternative. I refuse to play this game.

We have no reason to cooperate in the destruction of our union and our public school system, and then pat ourselves on the back imagining that we just saved ourselves from something worse. No, the “something worse” is always just around the corner, and the point of their whole charade is to get us to agree to it one piece at a time. I offer the following strategic rules for engaging in this situation: Rule One, we stand by our demands, and if we cannot achieve them, it must not be because *we* have abandoned them; Rule Two, we seek to win our demands on the basis of our own strength as a union and a community, not because we have caved in to the supposed strength of our opponents and conceded to something worse in exchange; Rule Three, there can be no backroom deals against the membership, the members must be in control of their own destiny, in control of their own leaders, and must not be blindfolded; and Rule Four, never trust the words or good intentions of the attackers of public education, we must rely on our own experience and our own best reasoning.

As we move forward in this fight, we must always stand by the motto of Frederick Douglass, “If there is no struggle, there is no progress.” We have been told for too long that the smarter choice is to “go along to get along,” that if we simply concede to the attacks against us, then we will not suffer as badly. We have been told for too long that we must abandon our principles of reason and justice, and that we must replace them with a three-point program of dog logic: lay down, roll over, and play dead. But no matter how dire a situation may be, you can never convince all of human kind that the logic of giving up is superior to the logic of standing up.

We have a great deal to accomplish over the coming weeks and months, and I would like to turn to those tasks now, so that we can continue our democratic discussion and voting that should form the basis of how our union makes its decisions. I want to thank all of our members for the work and the input you have given since our last mass meeting, and I hope that today’s meeting can be just as fruitful and positive. I believe that these kinds of teacher mobilizations will be the best means of rebuilding our union. Our last meeting put us back on our feet—now, let us proceed to march ahead, and together, I know that we will find our way.

Fire Abusive Tyrant Principals

Principals who verbally, physically, or sexually abuse students or teachers must be fired immediately & replaced by principals who foster learning, safety & curiosity

Rally to Lower Class Size & Fire Henderson Principal Ms. Manciel

4:00pm Tues March 31st at Henderson 16101 W Chicago, Detroit

Emergency Manager Darnell Earley and his predecessors have transformed the mission of Detroit schools from learning into prison-like containment. At the behest of Governor Rick Snyder and with the blessing of Mayor Duggan, the EM's have made it common practice to hire warden-like tyrant principals. These authoritarian, abusive and often mentally ill principals have no business in any employment that puts them in a position of power over (or close proximity to) children. For years principals have been allowed to get away with terrorizing their students, and have retaliated against any teachers who refuse to toe the party line of abuse, repression, and in some cases, *corporal punishment of children*.

The crimes committed by Detroit Public School's principals span the spectrum of abuse. Mann principal Ms. Frencher's reign of terror is characterized by barging into classrooms to shout and curse at teachers and students alike, reducing not only students, but also their teachers to tears. When Mann building rep and beloved veteran teacher Ms. Jamison dared file a grievance against Principal Frencher's policy of arranging lunch schedules to prevent Mann teacher union meetings, Principal Frencher retaliated by writing up Ms. Jamison for "insubordination." Similar abuses have been reported at Mason and other schools across the district.

At Clark, the sexual harassment of a teacher by principal Mr. Thomas was reported, with more teachers beginning to come forward. Obviously, any school employee who cannot conduct themselves in a sexually appropriate manner is not only a danger to staff, but most especially to a school's children.

And most shockingly, at Marquette, principal Mr. Lockhart has added corporal punishment to his toolkit of repression, with multiple reports of students, including elementary aged children, being handcuffed as a form of discipline. This is in addition to verbal abuse similar to the kind reported at Mann and Mason. And this is not uncommon. At DSA high school, attendance officer Ms Drake-Howard regularly hits, with a yard stick, any students who remain in the halls after passing period. At Cody, and many other high schools, the practice of excessive discipline in the form of lengthy suspensions for minor offenses runs rampant. Students often receive 2 or 3 month suspensions towards the end of the school year, which

deliberately forces droves of students out of school and into failing their entire semester. At EEVPA and other middle and high schools, mace and pepper spray are deployed on a regular basis as brutish form of crowd control, resulting in 7 students having asthma attacks. At Henderson the principal harasses staff and refuses to request another teacher from the district despite kindergarten classes of 40 students.

Stop Running Detroit Schools Like Prisons

Fire principals who act like wardens & who demand teachers be their prison guards -
End harassment/retaliation of students & teachers who speak out against abuse

Renew the Fight for Public Education in Detroit

No school closings- lower class size - Hire more teachers & support staff - No High-Stakes testing - Repair buildings- No Charterization or conversion to EAA

These stories, told by students, parents and teachers, sound so horrific that the uninformed might be inclined to believe they were hearing recitations from the children's book and movie, *Matilda*, the story of a brilliant first grade girl and her kind teacher, who rebels against the tyranny of their crazed principal, Ms. Trunchbull. But in fact, these are the formative experiences endured by developing young minds. Teachers have been told to mimic, or, at minimum, keep quiet about this behavior. It is high time for the Principal Trunchbolls of Detroit Public Schools to *seek employment elsewhere*.

Under this regime of child abuse, and with class sizes soaring as large as 55 as early as kindergarten, any learning that

takes place happens *in spite of* the regime of EM, and is a testament to the dedication of Detroit's embattled teachers and the resiliency and determination of its youth. Despite nearly two decades of attack on our schools, the students and parents of Detroit remain committed to the idea of public education; the idea that wherever you may start out in life, and whatever you may lack for in your family and home, that in school every child should receive the resources they need to learn and thrive. It is this ideal that teachers are striving to make real every day

It is this ideal that students are fighting for. The deep commitment to their students, is what gives teachers real pride in their schools and their city. At odds with every attempt to curtail creativity and stifle learning, students find ways to express themselves and to think critically. It is this fierceness in the face of adversity that is the source of school spirit for so many young people across the city. This is the dream students and teachers are fighting to defend. And in order to win the real awakening of this dream, we must now go on the offensive.

The policy of hiring abusive principals, along with yearly school closings, and never ending state-take over schemes, has

been carried out in the name of saving money and improving academic performance, but the truth is, the EMs' *real* purpose is to degrade our school system into high-discipline vocational training, preparing young people to accept low-paying service jobs in which they will be expected to accept the same second-class treatment they experienced as children at the hands of their principal, as adults at the hands of their boss.

This is the same fundamentally racist Jim Crow policy that W.E.B. Dubois spoke against when he said narrow vocational training was an attempt to "take the eyes of these millions from the stars and fasten them in the soil, and if their young men must dream dreams, let them be dreams of corn bread and molasses." But the teachers of Detroit did not enter this profession to be the agents of principals who wish to see the dreams of their students "fastened in the soil," and veteran teachers have not weathered this storm for the meager attainment of "corn bread and molasses" for Detroit's youth. Just as it took the civil rights movement of Martin Luther King Jr. to finally begin to create the integrated, equal, quality education Dubois advocated, it will take a *new* civil rights movement to defend what is still progressive in public education, to win back what's been lost, and to attain true equality, not just under the law, but in the real lives of black, latina/o and other minority and poor communities across our nation.

The protests that began in Ferguson, MO, over the murder of unarmed black teen Michael Brown and spread across the nation, signaled that there is a new civil rights movement for this new generation. It was no coincidence that it started in Ferguson, a small town that's part of huge patchwork of St. Louis suburbs stifled by the New Jim Crow, where Michael Brown was unable to attend the school five minutes away from where he lived, and was instead forced to board a bus and attend an inferior segregated school nearly a half hour away. The fires of Ferguson brought to mind Detroit's own proud history of struggle, beginning with the urban uprising in 1967. This history, combined with the plan for revitalizing the city; to create two separate Detroits, one white, one black, separate and unequal, made Detroit one of the first to answer the challenge Ferguson put to the nation.

Following the heroic example of the young protesters fighting for justice for Michael Brown around the nation including marches in Detroit that shut down the I-75, I-94 and M10 freeways following the failure of the grand jury to indict killer cop Darren Wilson, Detroit's besieged teachers decided to take a stand for their students and themselves. The teachers elected the long time BAMN civil rights activist, Cass Tech math teacher, Steve Conn, as president of the Detroit Federation of Teachers' union. Teachers elected President Conn to lead them in a fight to defend public education, no longer to be used like guards beholden to their principal-wardens in schools run like prisons.

For anyone following the news, governor Snyder's power grab of moving control of DPS from the State Department of Education to the State Department of Technology, Management and Budget, it's clear Snyder is preparing to make his move against DPS this spring. We should not wait for the governor, the EM or the "Commission on the Future" Committee (from which the only locally elected and empowered school board member just resigned) to make the first move. We all know that democratic control of Detroit schools was ripped from voters for the sole purpose of destroying our public education system.

Whatever the specifics of their "plan" turn out to be, we know we will need to mount a fight. Let's not wait for them to make the first move. Instead, let's go on the offensive now. If a united movement of students and teachers takes on abusive principals, exposes them through a campaign of mass action; rallies, marches and public hearings, we can get the worst of these abusers fired and put the remaining principals on notice; if you want to keep your job, start treating students and staff with respect. With these initial victories we will be in an excellent position to defeat whatever attack the EM and governor launch.

The first in a series of pickets of abusive principals was held at Mann Elementary after school on March 3rd. The picket was met by an outpouring of support from parents, students and community, with cars honking in support and children holding up signs reading "Fire Principal Frencher" and "Drop the Charges against Ms. Jamison". Boiler operators joined the picket, because their jobs are also under threat from layoffs, and whose loss would seriously endanger the safety of DPS students and staff. Brave Mann teachers manned the picket line and were joined by teachers and students from around the district. The picket at Marquette on March 17th rallied neighborhood teens, who heard chants of "Handcuff students? Hell no! Principal Lockhart has got to go!" and came out to join the picket. The very same day, the district fixed the leaking gymnasium roof and sent an extra teacher to reduce class

size in 2nd grade. These pickets show just how much power and support we have when we organize our collective power and fight to win. This must be just the opening move in the battle for our schools. It will take more than one picket to get rid of Principal Frencher and Principal Lockhart and their compatriots. We must hold pickets at schools across the district to make the united city-wide fight necessary for victory.

If we can back off the myriad of vultures circling our school system, we have the possibility not only to defend what we have, but to win the improvements we need to transform our schools into places where teachers are able to finally answer their calling; to teach young people to develop and discover themselves, learn about the world and fight to change it. Places where young people can at last satisfy their yearning to *breath free*.



Mann Elementary students join the picket

Have you faced abuse from your principal?

Call: (313) 310-8871

Email: nicole.conaway@ueaa.net

Rally at the DFT Negotiations

April 15th @ 4pm at the Fisher Bldg. 3011 w. Grand Blvd. Det

- **All Teacher Must Receive Their School Assignments Before Summer Break**
- **End the Moratorium on the Raises for Teachers**
- **Lower Class Sizes**
- **Comparable Teacher Pay & Benefits**
- **Cancel the Debt**
- **Comparable Funding for DPS Schools**
- **Return EAA Schools to DPS**
- **Fully Empowered, Elected, Detroit School Board- No More Emergency Managers**
- **Tri-County Integrated School District**
- **End the New Jim Crow that's Been Imposed on Detroit**
- **Real, Equal Opportunity for All Detroit Students**

On April 15th, at 4pm at the Fisher Building, newly elected Detroit Federation of Teachers (DFT) union president, civil rights activist and BAMN member, Steve Conn, will enter into his first negotiation with republican Governor Snyder's latest Emergency Manager (EM), Darnell Earley. Steve will not be alone. He will have with him BAMN National Chairperson and attorney Shanta Driver, leader of the new civil rights movement, who argued before the U.S. Supreme Court this in October 2013 defense of affirmative action. He has been called to this meeting by Earley with the expectation that he will do what his predecessor, Keith Johnson did, and bow to every wish and whim of this governor-imposed dictator and then work with the EM to convince the teachers, students and parents that they should accept the latest round of school closings, layoffs, EAA scheme or charterization plan, teacher pay-cut or class-size increase.

It is a new day. This year, Steve and Shanta enter into the negotiation with a mandate from his members and from the students of BAMN that he will not accept the New Jim Crow for Detroit students or teachers. Steve and Shanta enter the meeting with Earley, not to accept ultimatums from Snyder's crony, but to present the EM with a plan of immediate actions that Earley could take *right now* to improve education in Detroit.

The program is simple:

Tell teachers what their school assignments will be in June, not in August, so that teachers, students and parents have a sense of stability in the schools and their jobs. If any teachers are going to be given a bad evaluation, they must receive this decision in June so that it can be appealed before the summer break.

The moratorium on teacher pay raises must end. If DPS is to retain and attract the much needed teachers that make our district function, they must receive pay comparable to that of the best, wealthiest and whitest suburban districts. Along with this, the district itself must receive the same level of funding of that of its suburban counterparts. The fact is that our city receives the least funding, while it clearly has the most need. This makes no sense.

Along with this, the debt, all incurred from state-take-over schemes starting in 1999 and continuing to today with the EMs, must be cancelled. If money can be found to bail out banks and auto companies, then it is only just that Detroit schools, whose students are not in any way to blame for the debt the schools now staggers under, should receive the same sort of assistance as GM and Bank of America.

Steve and Shanta will demand lower class size. This is the single most important thing that would have an immediate effect on the quality of education in Detroit.

Finally, the EAA, or Snyder-Schools, must be returned to DPS. These Snyder-schools are a sham. Ask the students what their average day is like and a horror story unfolds. Students are warehoused, not taught. Students are told to receive instruction from a computer rather than a teacher. They are told to write a few token lines on a board, then are told they can have the remainder of class time to amuse themselves as they see fit. Almost no homework is given. Some days students are stored in the auditorium or gym with only one substitute to supervise, and on the week before holiday break students are told that this week is a “fun” week during which no learning is to take place.

While in ordinary situations students can be counted on to advocate for less homework and often greet free-time with relief, the situation in the Snyder-schools has gotten so bad that the students themselves often decry the lack of homework and instructional time, saying that they are not learning anything, and that while some of their previous Detroit Public Schools might have been boring at times, at least they were learning. These students are being treated totally unseriously. The goal of these schools can be no more than to warehouse young people from years 14-18, after which, if they are lucky, they will receive a diploma that no self-respecting university would take seriously, given the Snyder-schools abysmal non-attempt to prepare these youth for college.

These Snyder-schools should be transferred back to DPS immediately. Whatever problems DPS may have, these prison-like facilities that treat students like inmates who happen to be in GED program have done worse by these students than DPS ever did. It is time to end the sham of EAA now. Students cannot afford another year under this regime of fragrant disrespect to their intelligence and ability.

If Earley is to last longer than a year, and leave the city without being known as the man who caused a riot in Detroit, he will take these demands to Snyder.

The best way to convince Earley that he doesn't want to be the EM that caused the Detroit riot of 2015 is to turn out in large numbers to the demonstration at the Fisher Building during the negotiations. If Earley can hear the students and teachers of Detroit marching and chanting in this meeting with Steve and Shanta, we can bring home for Earley that Steve is not just one man, to be bought off and to sell out like the rest. We can show that when Steve and Shanta speak, they speak for, and are accountable to, all of us.

Everyone knows the problems of the Detroit schools stem from a lack of funding that has its roots in the racist policy of segregating Detroit students from their surrounding suburban white counterparts. Yet for years now, Detroit students have been traveling to suburbs near and far to try to get a decent education. But in the suburbs, Detroit students often find themselves funneled into separate and unequal schools specifically set up by suburban districts to absorb the influx of Detroit students into bargain-basement schools. These districts happily siphon off the per-pupil funding they saved by not providing Detroit students with a full range of art, music, sports, AP classes, etc, to help support their faltering budgets for their own, separate schools. Meanwhile, students from the suburbs crop up in Detroit's premier magnet schools of Cass and Renaissance because of the unique programs these schools offer.

What is clearly needed here is not this hodge-podge of systems, many of which aren't set up for the benefit of Detroit's children, but instead what is needed is a centralized tri-county school system for Wayne, Macomb, and Oakland counties, as well as the building of more magnet schools, so that we can have a system that fosters integration, and thus deters the tendency of the wealthiest and whitest schools to receive the lion's share of the resources. If this is done in a way that maintains Detroit's control over its own schools, we have a possibility of attaining a rational, integrated school system that will not only improve the lives of Detroit's youth, but, with the addition of more magnet schools in Detroit, would become beloved alma maters of suburban students as well.

**The Coalition to Defend Affirmative Action, Integration, Immigrants Rights and Fight for Equality By Any Means Necessary
Equal Opportunity Now/BAMN Caucus www.bamn.com**

(313) 806-1485 or (313) 980-7075 email@bamn.com twitter: @followbamn instagram: @joinbamn facebook: BAMN

Statement by the Detroit Federation of Teachers
Regarding Our Terms for Negotiations with State Takeover Authorities

April 15, 2015

Addressed to Emergency Manager Earley,

Over the past three months, the Detroit Federation of Teachers has elected a new leadership and adopted a range of policies and demands to address the educational crisis in our district. I believe that your administration is fully aware of all of these developments. The deteriorating conditions of our schools — as well as the dissatisfaction of teachers and students towards the management of the district — are likewise well known by all parties. For the purpose of this statement, a concise summary of our position and demands should be sufficient.

The Detroit Federation of Teachers finds that the state management of our school system has been unilaterally detrimental to the quality of education and the financial stability of the district. We find that the state management is disingenuous in purporting to remedy either problem, and has enacted a series of policies that exacerbate both. We hold that the state must relinquish its authority over the Detroit schools, must restore democratic control to the local electorate, and must cancel the entire debt which was produced over the course of all state management regimes in the district.

The Detroit Federation of Teachers finds that the specific educational institutions promoted by state management — charters and the EAA — have failed to serve any educational interests and now rank among the absolute worst schools in the nation. We hold that it is necessary to enact a moratorium on charters and to return all EAA schools to the district.

The Detroit Federation of Teachers finds that the state management has greatly worsened the segregated and unequal qualities of the district and violates the civil rights of the people of Detroit. We hold that the state must increase the funding of the district to provide the Detroit schools with equal quality programs, facilities, and salaries comparable to the best public schools in the state. We hold that “separate can never be equal,” and that our school system must live up to the mandate of *Brown v. Board of Education*, both in letter and spirit. Charters are now the most segregated sector of education for black and Latina/o students, and combined with the denial of democratic rights and the absence of public accountability, the state has propagated a Jim Crow regime in

our city. We hold that equality and integration must define the policy aims of the district.

The Detroit Federation of Teachers finds that the state management has degraded the most basic, practical conditions for teaching and learning. We hold that the state must lower class size, provide text books for all students, restore and expand music, art, and physical education classes, and increase support staff and ancillary services.

Among the demands of the DFT, there are measures which your administration can accomplish at absolutely no cost, with the stroke of a pen, effective immediately. We demand that all teachers must receive their fall assignments by the end of the school year in June, and that appeals of all assignments and evaluations be heard immediately afterwards. We demand that all teachers will be guaranteed a daily prep hour (including elementary and middle school teachers). We demand that the state recognize the Detroit Federation of Teachers as the representative bargaining organization for its membership.

Attached to this statement, you will find the resolutions which our members voted on and passed at a mass membership meeting on January 25, which include specific points beyond this summary. Such resolutions constitute the active policies of the DFT. Any further resolutions or decisions that are pertinent to your administration will be made available to you at our earliest convenience.

Steve Conn
President, Detroit Federation of Teachers

Save Our Students! Save Our Schools!

STOP THE SNYDER-PLAN

Save Our City: Save Public Education in Detroit

Conservative governor Snyder's plan for Detroit schools, touted as a solution to the state-incurred debt, is really a plan to dismantle all public education in Detroit, thus gutting the city of its most precious resources and valuable institution. If Snyder succeeds, his plan will turn the steady stream of the Detroit Exodus into a thundering torrent, as the black and Latina/o families with the means, leave, while those who cannot escape are relegated to schools without teachers, that warehouse rather than educate.

Snyder's plan is rooted in an old Jim Crow style model of education implemented by southern districts seeking to avoid integration after the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling of 1954. These districts closed down their own public schools rather than integrate, and replaced them with private, but state-authorized, whites-only schools free of public regulation and oversight. White parents enrolled their children in these all-white schools, while black children were left in substandard all black schools. In other words, the Snyder-Plan, then, as now, has been crafted with the *intent* to segregate, and is a profoundly racist and arrogant policy.

Modern Detroit was built on the influx of black families in the first decades of the twentieth century, fleeing the segregation of the south for the jobs and opportunity of a city not run by Jim Crow laws. This mass protest against Jim Crow by millions of southern black people is known as the Great Migration. Southern black families rejected the leadership of the Booker T. Washingtons' in the south and came north where there were more opportunities and a much greater possibility of a fight for dignity. There is no north to flee to now, and Detroit's suburban school districts have only been prepared

to offer Detroit students a stripped-down version of the education they provide their own children

If Snyder believes the grandchildren of the Great Migration, and the new Latina/o immigrants from Mexico and Central America that make up Detroit's growing Latina/o community are going to accept a New Jim Crow today, he is dead wrong. And it is up to us to prove him

wrong. We can defeat this plan using the same methods that Dr. King used break the old Jim Crow of the south in the 1950's and 1960's, through the methods employed against the northern-style racism black residents faced in Detroit when people rose up in 1967, and through the methods exemplified by Ferguson in 2014 and Baltimore in 2015.

Trying to discover just what exactly the Snyder-plan entails is impossible without examining his other "reform" districts. All the statements Snyder and the newspapers publish regarding his plans for Detroit are deliberately misleading, using the absurd comparison between our public school district and the for-profit car manufacturer, GM. They talk of splitting DPS into a "new" and "old" company, outline the

appointment of multiple "authorities" and "boards" -none of them elected by the people of Detroit, who undemocratically control this "new" district, which he says will be composed of charter and EAA schools, completely destroying and replacing all the public schools of Detroit.

If you are wondering what the hell all that means, you are not alone. To get answers about what this would mean for you and your school, we must turn, not to the words of our Governor, but to his *deeds*. Snyder compares what he plans to impose on Detroit to what he has already

"Who would be free, themselves must strike the blow..."

"...If there is no struggle there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom and yet deprecate agitation are men who want crops without plowing up the ground; they want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters."

- Frederick Douglass



done in the cities of Highland Park and Muskegan Heights, as well as his Education Achievement Authority (EAA).

In 2012, in Highland Park, management of the school district was turned over to a private for-profit charter school company (Leona Group LLC). Leona cut electives down to the bare minimum needed for students to graduate, and reduced special-education services down to the bare minimum of compliance with the law. They hired uncertified teachers at low cost and failed to maintain building and grounds maintenance. Now, having driven nearly 1 in 3 students out into surrounding districts, they are closing Highland Park High School, consolidating all K-8 education into one building, and moving 9-12 into an old middle school. Despite this, Leona does not consider Highland Park Schools profitable enough, citing the “unexpected” costs of building maintenance and special education as the largest drain on their profits.

While most Detroiters have a good sense of the terrible state of education in nearby Highland Park, Muskegan Heights, far to the west, tells a similar tale. The Muskegan Heights School District (also a majority black city) was turned over to the management of another for-profit company called Mosaica. This district has lost every single one of its old teachers, and now has a teacher turnover so high that students may receive 3 different instructors per year in one subject. Students describe hours of “busy-work”, uncertified teachers, and increased fights among students, while teachers complain of payless-paydays, appallingly low salaries and a work environment that burns out even the most dedicated instructor. The district has been found by the state government to have violated the rights of its special education students by failing to provide them with services, and staff say they were told to say their students didn’t need the services because the district wouldn’t pay for them. After two years of this, the Mosaica company is leaving 3 years ahead of schedule, also citing special-education and building maintenance as “unexpected” costs that made running the district unprofitable.

Now Muskegan Heights is supposed to be run by an “independent” appointed “charter board”. What exactly that is supposed to mean, and how it will be different from the management of Mosaica is deliberately unclear, and history shows us that it is likely to be more of the same; a shell-game, with the same destructive institutions under a different name every few years.

In Snyder’s EAA schools, students receive one of the worst educations in the country, in schools without homework, without books and supplies, where computers that barely work are substituted for instruction by actual teachers. Students are required to attend these schools year-round, but sometimes spend their entire day in the auditorium. These schools provide diplomas that are worthless to colleges and universities, who are well-aware that these places don’t prepare anyone for higher education.

The real purpose of the EAA has been to degrade these schools into high-discipline vocational training, preparing young people to accept low-paying service jobs in which they will be expected to accept the same second-class treatment they experienced as children at the hands of their schools, as adults at the hands of their boss.

This is the same fundamentally racist Jim Crow policy that W.E.B. Dubois spoke against when he said narrow vocational training was an attempt to “take the eyes of these millions from the stars and fasten them in the soil, and if their young men must dream dreams, let them be dreams of corn bread and molasses.”

So, what will happen to your school if we do not stop Snyder? It will be shut down. All DPS schools will be. What will take their place? A smaller number of overcrowded schools with conditions like those in Highland Park, Muskegan Heights, and the EAA, where uncertified teachers are used as crowd-control and students are told to sit at computers all day. Schools without books, without art, music, sports. Schools without councilors, social-workers, speech-therapists, psychologists and special-ed teachers. Schools where grades K-8, or even K-12 are stuffed into one crumbling building. Schools where a company decides whether or not to educate you based on whether or not it’s profitable, and where special needs students are considered toxic because they cut into these companies’ profits.

This “market-model” of education, where “efficiency” (that is, reducing costs) is the priority, is no model for *any* school. Our children are not products, not cars on an assembly line, not goods to sell, and our tax dollars and millages are not for the purpose of lining the pockets of “entrepreneurs”. It is not possible to provide an equal, integrated, quality education and to also turn a profit. And this model would not even be proposed for white children. Education is a *right*, and obviously an investment in the future of our society, and its worth cannot be quantified in dollars gained or lost. For education to be real, money must be spent, not made.

Detroit Federation of Teachers(DFT) president Steve Conn has called for a fight to be made by teachers, students and the community of Detroit to defeat the Snyder-Plan. Now is the time for the people of Detroit to stand up to defend our community. Our public schools have always been the central basis that has united Detroit as a community and provided hope for the futures of our young people. The Snyder-Plan will destroy the future of Detroit’s youth and leave a gaping hole in place of the heart of our community. Snyder’s plan will mean the segregation of the black and Latina/o communities of Detroit in a far more cruel way than ever before.

But Detroit’s youth, teachers, and the community at large can defeat this cruel, racist plan. BAMN is joining with DFT president Steve Conn to mobilize the community and lead the fight to win that is necessary. ***Join this fight, join BAMN!***

ADDRESS TO THE THIRD SPECIAL MASS MEMBERSHIP MEETING
“Defeating the Snyder Plan”
May 3, 2015

Greetings, fellow teachers! Three days ago, Governor Snyder officially revealed his new plan to overhaul the Detroit school system. The very existence of this new plan is a *de facto* admission that his old plan has been a miserable failure, and has failed so miserably that it is necessary to change course drastically. This is the only point on which I can agree with our Governor—yes, I completely agree that his plan has been a miserable failure and that drastic changes are necessary. In fact, I have been arguing this for years, and I would like to thank the Governor for finally acknowledging that I have been right the entire time and that his schemes have been the real problem. However, the new Snyder plan is even more of an abomination than the old one—it is nothing other than a convoluted reorganization of the old plan to destroy public education and to steal from the children of Detroit. But because the new plan is intended to be more deceptive and to conceal the taste of poison with a heavy dose of artificial flavoring, my first task at this meeting is to report to this membership what the new Snyder plan really is.

Unfortunately, the local news media have not made this task any easier. The newspapers function as free advertising agencies for the politicians who sell out our city. Most people have no idea what the new Snyder plan would actually do to the schools—they only know that Snyder is up to no good based on seeing the results of his work first-hand. We can rejoice that the people of Detroit are very wise to learn from first-hand experience and reasoning rather than the misleading jargon coming from the politicians and the press. But it is our responsibility as teachers to educate the city about what is really happening, and it is our responsibility as leaders to make clear that we can defeat the Snyder plan before it is ever implemented. We have already taken the first steps in defeating it.

The most prominent feature of the new plan is to divide the district into two parts—one for paying off debt and the other for running the schools. Snyder compared his plan to the Chapter 11 bankruptcy deal that General Motors received in 2009, in which the old General Motors Corporation became the Motors Liquidation Company and inherited all of the debt, while the new General Motors Company was formed to inherit all of the profitable assets. The purpose of this reorganization was to bolster the stock value of the new company as it would be freed from all of the old liabilities. In the process, the new General Motors heavily slashed the pay and benefits of the auto workers.

On the surface, the Snyder plan looks similar, mainly because it turns the old Detroit Public Schools into a debt payment system and creates the new City of Detroit Education District to run the schools. The old DPS would pay off its debt by inheriting the property tax millages that Detroiters voted on to support the schools. Aside from the fact that this would be blatant taxation without representation, as Detroiters did not vote to tax ourselves just to pay off state debt, this still does not explain dividing the district in two—the exact same payment plan would be possible while maintaining a single district. Additionally, the plan does not really constitute a clean slate for the new Education District since it would be *losing* the property tax millages in order to keep paying off the debt anyway. The advertisement of a “debt-free” district is just a lie and a simple shell game. Just because the state debt is placed under a different shell doesn’t mean that we aren’t being forced to pay for it.

The comparison to the General Motors deal is also important for another reason, and not just as a deception to create the appearance of a debt-free system. In the case of General Motors, establishing a separate, debt-free entity was a benefit to stock investors who needed to believe that they would see financial returns on their investments and not be dropping their money into a giant hole. But public schools are not traded on the stock market and are not supposed to yield *financial* returns. Quite the contrary, public schools are not supposed to make any profits whatsoever and should only exist to provide an education. However, *charter school companies* are a completely different story. Whereas the dividing of the district achieves nothing for the public schools and nothing for the people of Detroit, the creation of a separate district can, however, serve to attract businessmen who may want to buy out some of the schools knowing that *they* will not be paying off any existing debts. The charter companies can be assured that they will receive a definite per-pupil dollar amount with no strings attached, and can gauge the amount of profit they will steal from the students, accordingly.

Before Snyder’s plan was officially revealed, his administration noted that the plan would be based upon the models of Highland Park and Muskegon Heights. Many of the teachers in this room are very familiar with the destruction that was imposed upon Highland Park, and many of you have Highland Park students in your classrooms who are essentially refugees seeking shelter from Snyder’s brand of man-made disaster. The bottom line is that there is only one public school left in Highland Park, a single building for all elementary and middle school students and no more public high school—the rest is all charter.

The new Snyder plan for Detroit would also create a new section of the bureaucracy whose job would be to shut down public schools and sell them to charter companies: this is called the Detroit Education Commission. The Detroit Education Commission is planned to be a five-person body with three members appointed by the Governor and two appointed by the Detroit mayor. That Commission is to hire an “education manager” who will review school performance, manage security and other services, and will be charged with closing down any schools whose performance ranks in the bottom five percent of schools in the state and then selling them to outside companies. Spoiler alert: most of the Detroit schools rank among the lowest performing schools in the state, and the district does not close down charters given that a charter is a privately-owned business whose owner reserves that authority. The Detroit Education Commission would only exist, therefore, to sell out and destroy public education.

Notably, the unelected Detroit Education Commission would exercise this power over against and in spite of a school board. As for other financial matters, a financial review board would manage the money for both districts. Taken together, these two new bureaucratic organizations would render the new school board just as powerless as the existing one, and so it is almost irrelevant that the new board would eventually be elected. It is almost a wonder that the new board will be completely appointed at first, as the only reason for this would be to avoid having any board members who might criticize the new system. Just like the financial matters, this is just another shell game to create the illusion of democracy, when in fact it would establish *permanent* state control over all fundamental aspects of the district, replacing the current system which is claimed to be a temporary status for emergency purposes. Instead of the plain old dictatorship by a single Emergency Manager, the new plan would create a massively bureaucratic dictatorship with an education manager, an Education Commission, and a financial review board.

The new, massively bureaucratic dictatorship would also be charged with managing a new, massively bureaucratic school assignment system for the students. And the massively bureaucratic assignment system would include both public and charter schools, so that students can be *assigned* to charter schools rather than having to *apply* to them. Without knowing the details of this convoluted system, we can be certain that “school choice” would be largely just another illusion, and that parents would find their children being assigned to charter schools against their will. The new dictatorship would probably come up with the justification that they are only trying to reduce class size in

the public schools when they assign students to charters. And so on and so forth.

So far, everything about the Snyder plan is a big, whopping lie. The debt-free district is a lie, the democratically-empowered school board is a lie, and school choice is a lie. That just leaves one last candy-coated morsel to analyze, and that morsel is the promise of an additional \$72 million per year that Snyder proposes adding to the new district. \$72 million is the same amount of revenue that is currently brought to the district through the property tax millages, the same millages that Snyder intends to use as debt payments. The addition of \$72 million per year to the new district would offset the loss of that revenue after splitting the district in two. That *almost* sounds like a proposal for the state to pay the debt, or in other words, it almost sounds like the kind of “bail-out” that has politicians criticizing the Snyder plan from a conservative angle. But this raises another question: why doesn’t Snyder simply propose to apply the millages to the *new* district while applying the new, additional funding to pay off the debt? After all, both quantities are worth \$72 million, so why does it matter which egg gets put in which basket?

As a matter of fact, we received a very clear answer to that question on the day *before* Snyder officially announced his plan. On that day, the Michigan House of Representatives voted on a budget plan for all education in the state. That budget plan contained significant differences to the budget that Snyder proposed, in spite of the fact that the vote was easily carried by the members of Snyder’s own party. Some of the main differences were that the House refused to pay Snyder’s proposal of twenty-five million for childhood literacy and *seventy-five* million towards districts suffering from debt problems. That’s us. Instead, the House voted to prioritize funding for charter schools and so-called “cyber schools,” and if you’re wondering what on earth are cyber schools, that means schools without teachers. Cyber schools are the kind of garbage that you can find in the EAA where students simply spend all day attempting to learn from a computer program, or more likely just becoming really good at solitaire. These were the real priorities of the budget, and not the funding to pay off debt.

Even if we pretend to be naive and imagine that the House Republicans were rebelliously shooting down the proposals of their own Governor, we can clearly see which part of Snyder’s plan is meant to be real and which part is meant to be fake. The millages would be applied to pay off the debt because the millages are *real*. The additional \$72 million dollars for the new school district is, in reality, designed to fail. By proposing that the additional funding for Detroit should come at the expense of every other school district in the state, Snyder is ensuring

that every elected representative—Republican and Democrat—who is not from Detroit will vote against that funding and against depriving their *own* districts in order to pay for ours. Simple politics. Now, let's stop pretending to be naive and let's recognize that Snyder has worked out this plan together with his House Republicans so that Snyder can try to look benevolent while his subordinate party members do the dirty work. Yes, our district desperately needs more funding, but there is no need to take away funding from the education of other children. The best place to start refinancing is by taxing the rich parasites who have been robbing this district for the last fifteen years.

The local newspapers made every effort to present the Snyder plan with just as much dishonesty as Snyder, himself, touting a debt-free district with a locally elected school board (eventually) and new money. Thankfully, their dishonesty has not been a problem for us because Detroiters are wary of gifts from serpents and hardly anyone even reads those rags anymore. But now is the time to make clear what the Snyder plan really is and to organize a movement to defeat it before it can ever be implemented. The planned date for implementation is on July 1st, 2016, which gives us one year to organize and get out the truth. And the truth is this: the Snyder plan is a vicious scheme to shut down public schools and sell them to corporate profiteers. The Snyder plan is to make the state takeover permanent in controlling the finances and shutting down schools. The Snyder plan is to deceive the people by creating the illusion of financial stability and local democratic control, even though no one will ever see the illusion and will only see the destruction. The Snyder plan is to steal money from the education of our children and to put it in the pockets of his business allies. The Snyder plan is to destroy this union piece-by-piece as charter companies do away with teacher contracts and “cyber schools” eliminate teachers altogether. The Snyder plan is a fraud—it is a new coat of paint on his old jalopy that never worked. The Snyder plan is a crime for which he should be thrown into the new prison downtown, the only new building he will truly support in our city while he shuts down and degrades our schools. The Snyder plan is a racist attack on the minority youth of Detroit, a plan to deny our children any future at a university while only preparing them for a future of performing cheap labor or sitting behind bars. The Snyder plan is weak and cowardly and stupid—it is *all* of these things—but most importantly of all, the Snyder plan is something that *we can defeat*.

In every conceivable manner, the Governor packaged his plan to avoid a direct confrontation with our union. He assured union leadership that DFT contracts would be transferred to the new district, even though the real plan is to build charters that eliminate union contracts.

He construed every element of his plan to sound as though it meets our demands. Read the statement that I gave to Emergency Manager Earley and you will see a point-for-point parallel. Snyder tries to appear as though he is restoring local control, even though he is trying to make state control permanent. He tries to appear as though he is canceling the debt, even though he is still taking the debt payment money directly out of the school finances. He tries to appear as though he is increasing school funding and even “redistributing the wealth” in a particular sense, although he has no intention to do anything of the kind. He claimed that his plan is not intended to create a charter school district, although every aspect of his plan is clearly made for that purpose. He even tried to avoid a direct confrontation on the day of his announcement, choosing to hold his press conference in Detroit after he knew that we planned to be protesting in Lansing at that time. (Thankfully, we were able to hold demonstrations in Lansing and Detroit, simultaneously.)

The entire Snyder plan was construed, in its outward appearance, out of fear of *our* opposition and *our* demands. More than any other factor—more than the whims of his charter business backers, more than the political scuffle in preparing for the 2016 race for the White House—the factor of *our movement* determined how Snyder had to present his plan to the public. In doing so, he has inadvertently acknowledged that *we* are the true representatives of the needs and interests of the city of Detroit. We must remember this as we move forward, and always know that we carry this responsibility for our students and our community. Snyder knows that he must at least try to sound like us in some manner if he intends to maintain power in our city, and in that regard he is certainly doomed to fail because absolutely no one can trust a single word that comes out of his mouth.

We have the real power.

We also have the opportunity now to speak to the entire nation, to raise our demands in the context of a growing crisis over inequality and the dignity and future of our young people. As the educational budget in every state continues to suffer, and as spending is instead soaring towards building a massive police state, the nation’s everyday police atrocities have now become the basis for urban uprisings in places like Ferguson, Oakland, and Baltimore. We know that building a bigger police state is not the answer. We know that the answer for today’s young people is to give them a real, public education and a real future with good jobs—not to purchase tanks to roll down city streets or assault weapons to give police the firepower of an occupying army. That is no future at all, unless you think that death and destruction can be called a future. The national priorities are completely backwards, but

we have a program to move forward and there are millions of people right now who are looking for that program. It is our responsibility to make sure that they find it.

In my statement to the Emergency Manager, I accused the state of propagating a Jim Crow system in our city. This was not hyperbole on my part. For most of the last fifteen years, the people of Detroit have been denied any democratic rights to control over the schools, and the schools themselves have largely ceased to exist. In their place is a mountain of debt, the legacy of state-enforced robbery and tyranny, taxation without representation, and massive waves of students fleeing the district just like much of our community fled the South one hundred years ago. Charter schools, originally created after *Brown v. Board of Education* in order to build a private system that could avoid racial integration, are now the most conspicuous goal of the tyranny in our city. Charters are the most segregated sector of education for black and Latino students nationally. Academic performance has dropped precipitously, class size has grown enormously, and not one honest person can claim that any of this has been for the sake of education reform. We have endured an historic, racist attack, and our most important task is to stop enduring it and to start fighting it. I am so proud to represent you, the teachers of Detroit, in your heroic decision to stand up.

In turning to the work of today, I wish to report good news. My wife, Heather Miller, overwhelmingly won her challenge against a negative evaluation. The judge noted that the district—and I quote—“manipulated its personnel records in order to rid itself of an outspoken union activist.” I am so happy for my wife, and I cannot wait to win more victories for all of our members against this fraudulent evaluation system. I am eager to continue our building representative training and grievance campaigns and to shed light on every injustice that the state management has imposed upon us. We have demanded that the EM provide job placements and evaluations by the end of the school year in June, and now is the critical time to stand up for that demand. Last but certainly not least, before concluding my report and turning to today's business, I want to congratulate our members for turning out in Lansing. I want to thank you for the support that you have given me during my first hundred days as your union president, because without that support my job would be impossible. Thank you so much, and let's keep taking our fight to the people who are trying to make all of our jobs impossible. Detroit Federation of Teachers, we are marching forward again!

NO "RECONSTITUTION" OF OUR SCHOOLS

All Teachers Must Get Their Jobs Back

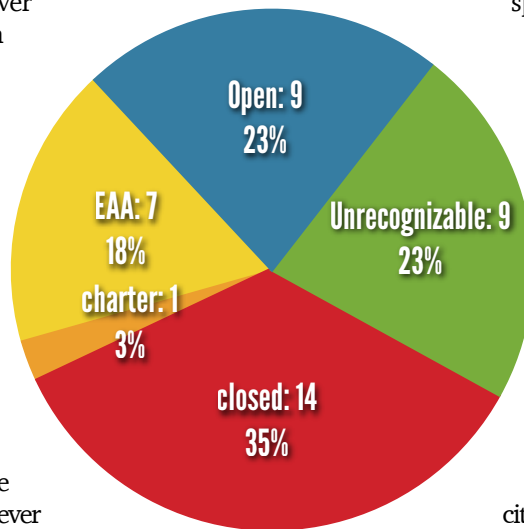
School "Reconstitutions" are Actually School "Degradations" and Meant to Prepare Schools for Closure or Conversion to EAA

If We Fight in the Spirit of Ferguson & Baltimore, We Can Stop This

School "Reconstitutions" are really school "Degradations" that replace whatever is working well in a school with high discipline, segregated schools stripped of art, music, sports and support programs, special ed staff, and fire the veteran teachers who are the most dedicated to their students and therefore have the greatest will to fight for their students and their communities. This plan would turn these schools into places that warehouse rather than educate.

The *real* reason behind the school "restitutions" or "restructures" is to degrade the schools so badly that they will no longer be places their communities feel are worth defending. Then, in a year or two, whoever the latest DPS overseer is will try to convert these schools to EAA, or simply close them, hoping to meet less resistance from students and parents, many of whom will have been forced into other schools because of appalling conditions in "reconstituted" schools, engineering a situation in which the community will no longer feel their school is worth fighting for. Earley is doing this because of our strength, because he doesn't feel able to get away with outright closing any schools this year. So he is trying to soften us up for next year.

The long-term effects of the degradation of "reconstituted" schools is evident from the last time this happened, in 2009. Only about a 4th remain open. Over half were closed or converted to EAA or charter, the remaining 4th were so changed as to barely resemble the community schools they once were, by combining schools



40 schools "reconstituted" in '09

together, moving schools into other buildings, splitting schools into multiple "small schools" and replacing the best staff. This makes completely clear that this isn't "reform", but instead a policy to *deform* and *destroy* our schools. Reconstitution has traditionally meant firing the teachers who are most loved by students and parents; those who spend long hours working with students after school, who are most experienced, and most innovative. These teachers often end up in a cruel purgatory, made to come to work everyday and sit in an empty room (called "Teacher Jail" in other cities) or put to work doing random tasks, from substitute teacher to lunch lady. This policy is intended to demoralize teachers so badly that they quit their jobs, especially when the district feels it can't justify firing them.

Many of these schools, like Marquette and Henderson, are places where teachers have begun standing up and fighting back against abusive and tyrannical principals. Replacing these principals with someone who treats students and staff with respect would, without question, improve these schools, but there is no need to throw the baby out with the bathwater by firing teachers who've labored tirelessly to teach despite a principal-engineered catastrophe. The biggest problem for Marquette is understaffing and a cruel principal. What Marquette needs is *more* teachers, not to

March from Thirkell to the Fisher bldg. 4pm 05/28

Fisher bldg. 3011 W. Grand Blvd, Det.

Save Our Students, Our Schools & Our City

Save Carstens, Young, Gardner, Henderson, Marquette, Mason, Sampson & Thirkell

Save Public Education in Detroit

Special Mass DFT mtg. 3pm 05/31

UofD Mercy Student Ballroom 4001 McNichols

replace teachers. Hiring a second music, art and gym teacher to expand these programs so every child has access to them is what Marquette needs, daily recess for every child (these children almost never receive recess due to over-testing, which naturally leads to behavior problems when they have been made to sit for hours without exercise) and ending the policy of using subs as permanent teachers. At Henderson there are 6 Title 1 teachers, and unlike at most schools, these teachers are actually being used to do what they were hired for- to aid teachers. Henderson is one of the few schools that is *not* understaffed. Teachers at Henderson have forged strong ties with the school's community. We must ensure that, whatever happens to the principal, the school retains all its teachers and staff.

Other schools have already had to weather a previous round of closings, like Mason and Carstens, where old buildings were closed and left vacant, destroying surrounding neighborhoods, and schools were moved to and combined with another building. These schools have been through enough "reconstituting" and "restructuring" for a lifetime and should be given the staff and resources they need to thrive, not given more of the same failing policy they've been suffering under. Carstens is the most understaffed of all 8 schools slated for reconstitution, with over 40 students in kindergarden classes, with teachers running back and forth between two classes while aides run crowd control in their absence, and over 50 in the 4th and 5th grades, with some classes taught by a sub year-round. They have no art or gym teacher, and an anti-union principal who has overseen 3 previous school reconstitutions, with devastating results. Carstens needs to hire *more* teachers and subs, not *replace* them.

Some of these schools are known for being really good neighborhood schools, like Sampson and Thirkell. Thirkell has won numerous awards for academic performance, such as the Excellent Schools Detroit award in 2014. At Thirkell, students and teachers have a principal who actually encourages them to take a stand for public education. She stood in support of teachers when they went to Lansing to protest against the governor's plans to close all DPS schools and replace them with charters and EAA's. Almost a 4th of Sampson students are special ed. To say this school has poor test scores and must be penalized is absurd, and punishes students with the most need by decimating their most valuable resources, their teachers and programs. What Sampson needs is more teachers so that no student is taught by a sub year round, and all student have access to art, music and gym. Thirkell and Sampson must keep their principals, all teachers and staff.

Gardner, on the border of Detroit and Dearborn, is one of the most integrated schools in Detroit, with 20% Arab, 13% white, and the remainder mostly black, with a small number of Latino students. Gardner is also one of the last remaining elementary-only (pre-k through 5th) schools left in the city. There are several bi-lingual teachers and even a tri-lingual teacher who speaks English, Arabic and Spanish, serving the needs of its diverse students, over a 4th of whom are bilingual and 11% are special ed. To dismantle the amazing staff in this school risks endangering an invaluable resource as more immigrants from the war-torn Middle East flee their homes for the promise of safety in the U.S., hoping their children will, sometimes for the first time, be able to attend school. We must

not allow such rare gem of an integrated school with multi-lingual teachers to be lost. The hopes, dreams and futures of a new generation of immigrants rests on the future of Gardner.

With Young, and all these schools, they are the only thing holding their surrounding neighborhoods together. If Young or any of these schools are degraded or shut down, it will mean an end for these neighborhoods by means of a plague of abandoned houses and blight. Young and the other 7 schools, are the hearts of their communities. We must not allow it to be ripped out or perverted into Snyder's failing EAA/charter schools.

In Snyder's EAA schools, students receive one of the worst educational experiences in the country, in schools without homework, without books or supplies, where computers that barely work are substituted for instruction by actual teachers. Students are required to attend these schools year-round, but sometimes spend their entire day in the auditorium. These schools provide diplomas that are worthless to colleges and universities, which are well-aware that these jail-like facilities don't prepare anyone for higher education.

The real purpose of tools like EAA and charters, dating back to the Jim Crow South in the 1950's, has been to segregate and degrade students' education into high-discipline vocational training, preparing young people to accept low-paying service jobs in which they'll be expected to accept the same second-class and racist treatment they experienced in school from their boss once they're adults. We must not allow this to happen to one more school, and we must fight to get the EAA and charter schools restored to DPS.

The bold mass action taken by the Detroit Federation of Teachers members and their President Steve Conn, when they protested in Lansing against the governor's plan to shut down all DPS schools, has got our enemies floundering; not to mention their fears of unrest like that in Baltimore spreading to Detroit. Snyder and Earley are right to fear Detroit could become the next Baltimore. The same segregated, unequal schools, crisis of foreclosures, unemployment, racist treatment in Baltimore mirrors that of Detroit. So that's a reasonable fear. It's likely that, in addition to Earley's pathetic reconstitution-as-plan-B to the Snyder-Plan, the governor will present some new plan that is aimed at destroying public education before the year is out, but if we fight like Hell now to stop the reconstitutions, we will be in an excellent position to deal him a crushing defeat.

Let's make sure the Spring of 2015 the year when there was NO school closings, NO "reconstitutions" and NO layoffs. We can make this Spring a turning point in our fight for public education. the point when we beat back the attack and finally went on the offensive to win the integrated, equal, quality education we need and deserve- starting with a massive hiring of teachers to reduce class size and ensure every student have access to art, music, and gym.

Detroit Federation of Teachers (DFT) President Steve Conn has called for a fight to be made by teachers, students and the community of Detroit to defeat the "Reconstitution". Now is the time for the people of Detroit to stand up to defend our community. Our public schools have always been the central basis that has united Detroit as a community and provided hope for the futures of our young people. BAMN is joining with DFT President Steve Conn to mobilize the community and lead the fight to win that is necessary. ***Join this fight, join BAMN!***

ADDRESS TO THE FOURTH SPECIAL MASS MEMBERSHIP MEETING
May 31, 2015

Greetings, fellow teachers, and welcome to the fourth mass democratic gathering of our union this school year. This meeting, owing to the time of year, represents both a culmination of what we have accomplished so far, and a starting point for the next chapter of our work. The end of every school year in Detroit brings a great deal of uncertainty for teachers, as the ongoing instability of the district keeps all of us living on the edge. However, we have no reason to submit to the forces of chaos—not in our district, and certainly not within our union. I hope that this meeting can continue our effort to chart a stable course for this union, and that our collective struggle for the future of our students can serve as the solid rock on which this union membership can rely.

Graduation is upon us, and for many hundreds of our students, it is a time for them to reflect on how far they have come, and to commit themselves to taking the next steps forward in their lives. I am hopeful for them. My own daughter graduates just three days from now. I believe in our students' capacity to succeed, and they have more than earned the right to celebrate their accomplishments. It is harder to earn a Detroit high school diploma than almost any other diploma in the nation. To reach that achievement, our students must contend with poverty, segregation, overcrowded classrooms with no books or supplies, harsh suspensions for minor uniform trifles, and a state-enforced dictatorship to impose a New Jim Crow system—compared to all that, a PhD from Harvard looks like a tiptoe through the tulips.

Our graduating students have persevered through tremendous obstacles in order to arrive at this moment, and each of them now faces the profound reality that after thirteen years of hard work in school, their lives are only just beginning. I think it is appropriate for us to engage in this reflective thought process, as well. Our union now faces a similar turning point—we have endured many years of hardships, and yet *we* are just beginning to come alive.

Today, the Detroit Federation of Teachers is the leading voice in our city to defend the rights of our students and community. Confronting every plot of the state politicians to degrade our schools (including the newly-proposed Snyder plan), the DFT has spoken out and has given the people of Detroit something that they have not had for most of the last fifteen years: an organized power in the district to advocate their needs and interests. We have risen to that challenge. But we did not achieve this easily, and it is important to review our progress to best understand what has worked for us and what still needs to change if we are going to keep moving forward.

Last December, this union was in shambles. Its president and executive board had virtually disabled all basic union functions—they worked as willing servants for the Emergency Manager, effectively putting the union under state takeover along with the management of the district. And like the Detroit schools, our union was suffering from the same problems: rapidly diminishing membership, tyrannical leaders, the absence of genuine democracy, no functioning means to redress problems, and an overall sense of dilapidation and abandonment.

Long before my election in January, I knew that I could not solve these problems alone. I asked for your help and support. I believed that the only way to get this union functioning again was to reestablish the active power of the membership. I can say, without any exaggeration, that my leadership could not exist without *your* leadership, without your active effort to take back control of the union—which included your placing hard demands on my shoulders.

Our first measures were simple, but essential. We needed mass membership meetings to enforce your democratic power, we needed building representatives in every vacancy to respond to all grievances, and we needed a program of action and key demands to determine our continuing agenda. In summary, we needed the core fundamentals of the union to start functioning properly. The union as a whole could move forward even if the remnants of the old regime were determined to pull it backwards. We were able to pursue numerous grievances, and even started a public campaign against abusive principals.

Our first major test was the meeting with Emergency Manager Earley in mid-April. For that meeting, it was absolutely necessary to establish one thing: that the leadership of the DFT will no longer act in collusion with the Emergency Manager against the interests of the members. No more secret agendas, no more backroom deals, no more selling out the teachers. We prepared our agenda ahead of time, took a membership vote, and distributed our statement to the EM publicly. In addition to our large-scale demands that the state relinquish control of the district and cancel the debt, I particularly insisted that the EM implement all demands that are fully under his control, such as providing fall teaching assignments and evaluations by the end of the school year in June.

To Earley's knowledge, that meeting was the first time that any DFT president had made any demands upon an Emergency Manager. I was proud of that personal distinction on the one hand, but I was also appalled by what it meant about my predecessors. It meant that we never previously had anyone negotiating for us throughout this state takeover.

The most climactic moment for our union came on the day that Governor Snyder unveiled his new plan to overhaul the Detroit schools. Our teachers marched in both Lansing and Detroit. Together, we provided the only voice for the real demands of the people of our city. While every political representative in Detroit remained silent, the Detroit Federation of Teachers took the lead. For everyone who wanted to know the real truth about the Snyder plan, they finally had honest advocates, and those advocates were the teachers.

The Snyder plan itself was a colossal miscarriage. In its current form, it does not have the support of either political party in the state legislature. Members of Snyder's own Republican majority are calling the plan "dead on arrival," while the Democratic minority leader in the Senate has stated that he cannot support an increase in Detroit funding at the expense of other districts. Mayor Duggan announced this past week that he would support the plan only if it included a fully elected school board, but according to today's news, the Governor does not intend to budge on that issue. Ironically, the only people who have announced their full support for the Snyder plan are Keith Johnson's cronies on our own executive board, who wrongfully printed an article in our union newspaper proclaiming the plan to be good for teachers.

As many of you know, the Snyder plan for Detroit is a replica of what was already implemented in Highland Park. There, a charter company, the Leona Group, was given control over the schools while the debt was split into a separate entity. The Leona Group left only a single public school for elementary and middle school students, while shutting down the only public high school and replacing it with a charter. This past week, the Leona Group announced that it will close down the charter high school at the end of the school year this June, leaving Highland Park students with no high school to attend. The Emergency Manager there is making arrangements with Detroit and other districts to take over the education of the students for which he was supposedly responsible. There is the Snyder plan in a nutshell: Highland Park went from having a failing *public* high school, to having a failing *charter* high school, to having *no* high school. The whole Snyder regime can only manage a school system if it has no students and no schools.

We cannot allow such a crime to be committed against our own district, and I believe that we are gaining more potential every day to liberate our schools from this political death grip. I can think of at least one historical analogy, which I hope that our history teachers will appreciate. In the years leading up to the American Civil War, the nation was convulsing under a factional struggle regarding the extension of slavery. Nothing seemed to solve the dispute. From the Missouri Compromise, to the Mexican-American War and the annexation of Texas, to

the Compromise of 1850 with the Fugitive Slave Law, to the Kansas-Nebraska Act, every attempt at a solution seemed to be making the political problem worse. In 1857, when the Supreme Court issued its notorious *Dred Scott* decision with the pretension of having settled the slavery question forever, Frederick Douglass spoke to a gathering of abolitionists in New York.

In his speech, Frederick Douglass struck a surprising tone of optimism. Even though the Supreme Court had eliminated all boundaries to the extension of slavery, Douglass saw something else on the horizon. “The fact is,” Douglass said, “the more the question has been settled, the more it has needed settling . . . You will readily ask me how I am affected by this devilish decision—this judicial incarnation of wolfishness? My answer is, and no thanks to the slaveholding wing of the Supreme Court, *my hopes were never brighter than now.*” Anyone hearing that speech at the time might have wondered if Douglass had lost his mind. But Douglass saw correctly, and the slavery question became so greatly *unsettled* that only its complete abolition could solve it.

The takeover of our public schools has also experienced a long series of bad settlements. With each new measure claiming to solve the crisis, every problem has grown continually worse and increasingly unsettled. Three consecutive state Governors have all imposed their own “solutions” to the crisis. When the takeovers first began, the Detroit schools had a \$100 million surplus. Now, DPS has a \$468 million deficit. Thousands of students have fled the district, dozens of schools have closed. Academic performance has declined precipitously, and each new measure to reconstitute, reorganize, or revitalize has proven to be a chain reaction of planned disasters. The new Snyder plan is the biggest, most pretentious, and most disastrous contrivance of them all. It cannot and will not settle the crisis of the Detroit schools any more than all the rest. In fact, the Snyder plan represents the most profound *unsettling* of the question that we have seen yet.

Many state legislators say that they are suffering from so-called “Detroit fatigue,” referring to this seemingly unending cascade of what are really their own failures. We, on the other hand, are suffering from Lansing fatigue, takeover fatigue, school closure fatigue, charter company fatigue, poverty fatigue, inequality fatigue, and New Jim Crow fatigue, among other kinds of fatigue that are too numerous to anthologize in this meeting. With the whole future of our schools being uncertain, and with all political authorities being perplexed beyond any chance of finding a resolution among themselves, we have the opportunity over the coming months to turn the table on the entire discussion. We have the only program that speaks to the needs of millions of Detroiters, and unlike the politicians, we do not need to fear the truth.

Our teachers have stayed committed to the students and community of Detroit through all the years of bad medicine, we know what it takes to make education work, and over the past several months we have started asserting that knowledge as never before.

In the months to come, we must find ways to build our struggle more broadly and deeply. We have in front of us a considerable number of vital issues to address with all of our strength: we must come to the defense of our special education teachers, we must confront the damaging schemes for reconstitution, and we must fight for our health care as the state is imposing a new contractor. We must proceed with elections and training for building representatives, with member grievances, and with appeals over the coming evaluations. I would like to address all of these items individually today. But before closing my report and turning to further business, I would like to touch upon one subject that is relevant to all of our activity. That is the subject of leadership.

As I have already stated, our success has depended upon so many teachers standing up as leaders, asserting themselves to take control of the union out of the hands of the state takeover and to place it back in the hands of our membership. This struggle is far from being over. My own ability to carry out the functions of union office largely depends upon my efforts to support this decisive layer of activist teachers against many obstacles, obstacles that are both external and unfortunately internal, as well.

For the past four months, I have had to protect and enforce the democratic decisions of this membership against what can only be described as attempts at outright sabotage. While our positive work has easily and thankfully survived these charades, I must nonetheless make clear that these attempts at sabotage have gone too far. Executive Vice President Ivy Bailey has taken up the backhanded practice of Keith Johnson, holding secret discussions to conspire with the Emergency Manager without the slightest accountability to democratic membership control. Along with the editorial in the Detroit News attacking union leadership, this behavior can only be regarded as the work of a Benedict Arnold. The executive board meetings themselves do not deserve to be called meetings—they are a circus of tantrum-throwing misfits and obstructionists who have no loyalty to the democratic will of the members on any issue and will only function on behalf of Keith Johnson and the Emergency Manager.

But even though none of these transgressions has impeded my ability to carry out most of the practical union business, and even though I am very accustomed to this small group of bureaucrats attacking me, *I cannot and will not allow these acts of sabotage to be inflicted*

against the wellbeing of our members. The day that Patrick—the chair of our Election Committee—was dragged into a prison cell for nothing more than attempting to carry out union business, was the day that the saboteurs had broken every conceivable boundary of acceptable behavior in this or any other professional association. When Emma Howland-Bolton began forcibly obstructing Patrick’s duties at a mass meeting in March, I should have instructed the sergeant-at-arms to remove her and bring an end to her repeated attempts at provoking conflict. But I could not have known at the time that Emma would call the police to press false charges against Patrick, and I could not have imagined that Patrick would later be arrested at his school and placed behind bars because of someone else’s fanatical attempts at sabotage. I will not rest while Patrick or any other member faces such outrageous abuse for nothing other than carrying out their basic democratic duties for this union.

These betrayals and personal attacks will not be tolerated. Anyone who attends a union function with the intention of threatening or abusing any teacher, any student, or any community member, will no longer be attending union functions. Most of us are fully aware that the district management uses threats, intimidation and bullying to repress our union members. I am committed to defeat those abuses, and I am least tolerant of all when these abuses are being carried out within our own union on behalf of the management. There is no justification for any union representative to use their connections with management or with the police to advance their agenda against the members. I may shrug off these ridiculous attacks when they are directed at me, simply because I do not have the time to waste on all of them, but I will not allow this persecution of any of our members.

A union should exist for the needs and interests of the members who comprise it. A union should make its decisions democratically, and once made, the officers of that union must be accountable to those decisions. The very word “union” is a declaration of the striving for unity, of the participation of many individuals as a single, united whole. We are not required to agree on all things, but we are required to conduct ourselves such that disagreement can be resolved by democratic discussion and voting rather than by the imposition of the will of a small band of would-be tyrants. (More specifically in this case, has-been tyrants.) A union can only thrive when the active participation of many people supersedes the bureaucratic machinations of a few. I have organized the mass membership meetings, such as this one, in order for such active participation to allow us to thrive in this challenging time.

There is not much historical precedent for the courageous stand that this union has taken. In most of the historic civil rights strug-

gles against the segregation and unjust conditions of the schools, teachers have generally tried to sit on the fence and remain invisible, while the driving force for change came from the mass action of the students. Student strikes and walkouts—from Farmville, Virginia to Birmingham, Alabama—almost always provided the critical leadership and call to action while the adults had to be shaken from their conservatism and reluctance. I still maintain that the same dynamic remains true for Detroit in our time, that a youth-led movement is the key to progress in our city and across the nation. But I am so proud that this union of teachers has found in itself a youthful courage and an idealistic hope for the future. We are a contradictory group of people, combining the conservatism of old age with the irrepressible determination of youth, combining the educated enlightenment of scientific thought with our constantly degraded status as replaceable cogs in a ruthless machine. We have embarked upon the road of struggle not because it was our first choice but because all other choices had been exhausted. We are now facing the greatest challenge in the history of this union, and although it may sound as crazy today as it did 150 years ago, I will echo the words of Frederick Douglass: “my hopes were never brighter than now.”

HEALTH CARE ALERT: All Out to Lansing to Stop Snyder's Plan to Destroy Health Care in DPS!

Defeat Snyder's Attempt to Drive Out the Teachers from the Public Schools!

March on the State Capitol – Wednesday, June 10 at 12pm – 124 W. Allegan St., Lansing, MI

A Call to Action by Steve Conn, Detroit Federation of Teachers' President

The Governor's new attack on our health care is nothing less than an attempt to drive teachers—and all other district employees—out of the Detroit Public Schools. This crisis now represents the do-or-die issue for the future of public education in Detroit. If Snyder and Emergency Manager Earley manage to implement their proposed assault, thousands of district employees would be forced to make an unthinkable choice: either leave the district to find real health care, or spend many thousands of dollars in deductibles *and* *starve in the process*. We are fighting for our very existence as public school teachers, principals, and staff. We cannot allow the Governor to impose this scheme, a scheme that would make it impossible for almost anyone to work in DPS. Everyone who is committed to public education in Detroit must take a stand now. Empty the schools on June 10, and march in Lansing to declare that you are sick and tired of Snyder's bad medicine!

The New Slum-surance Plan: What Is It?

The most prominent feature of the new plan is its multi-thousand dollar deductible requirement: thousands of additional dollars that you have to pay at full cost before the insurance will cover even a dime of your expenses. This is the equivalent of having no insurance until after you are completely broke. The deductibles are equal to or greater than the current annual total of each member's monthly contributions, meaning that members will have to pay *more than double* the current cost before the insurance will provide any coverage. In addition, there would be new coinsurance to pay, with higher copays on doctor and ER visits and especially medications. Anyone who actually needs health care coverage could easily end up paying the out-of-pocket maximums: \$6,600 for an individual or \$13,200 for a family.

The end result is a package that only provides the lowest level of support (Bronze) that is offered under Obama's Affordable Care Act. The Bronze tier is only

	2015 Current HMO Plans			2016 Proposal			
	Enhanced Core Henry Ford Network	Standard Core Henry Ford Network	Premium Plan Full HAP Network	Enhanced Core Henry Ford Network	Standard Core Henry Ford Network	Enhanced Premium Full HAP Network	Standard Premium Full HAP Network
Annual Deductible	0	\$500 employee \$1,000 family	\$500 employee \$1,000 family	\$3,000 employee \$6,000 family	\$4,000 employee \$8,000 family	\$2,000 employee \$4,000 family	\$4,000 employee \$8,000 family
Coinsurance	0%	0%	10%	20%	20%	20%	20%
Coinsurance Maximum (Annual)	0	0	\$500 employee \$1,000 family	\$1,500 employee \$3,000 family	\$1,500 employee \$3,000 family	\$2,000 employee \$4,000 family	\$1,500 employee \$3,000 family
Office Visit Copay	\$20	\$20	\$20	\$30 employee \$60 family	\$30 employee \$60 family	\$30 employee \$60 family	\$40 employee \$50 family
ER Visit Copay	\$100	\$100	\$100	\$100	\$150	\$250	\$250
RX copay: Generic/Preferred/Non-Preferred	\$5 / \$25 / \$40	\$5 / \$25 / \$40	\$5 / \$25 / \$40	\$20 / \$40 / \$60	\$20 / \$40 / \$60	\$20 / \$40 / \$60	\$20 / \$50 / \$100
Out-of-Pocket (OOP) Maximum	\$6,600 employee \$13,200 family	\$6,600 employee \$13,200 family	\$6,600 employee \$13,200 family	\$6,600 employee \$13,200 family	\$6,600 employee \$13,200 family	\$6,600 employee \$13,200 family	\$6,600 employee \$13,200 family

good for “*catastrophic coverage for those who won't use medical services*,” according to obamacarefacts.com. It is the “bare minimum” level of coverage permitted under the ACA—its actuarial value only covers about 60% of total medical costs. (Silver plans, on the contrary, are the “marketplace standard.” Silver plans are also the only tier that qualifies for tax credits and subsidies for people with low income: “If you make between 100%-250% of the Federal Poverty level then we strongly suggest going with a Silver plan due to the perks of Cost Sharing Reduction Subsidies. For the little bit of extra premium you'll have much better cost sharing, which means less out-of-pocket in an emergency. Typically you'll have better benefits too.”) In other words, the only real purpose of a Bronze plan is to satisfy the minimal requirement for health care—on paper only—to avoid the federal tax penalty.

It is unconscionable for Snyder and Earley to foist such a “catastrophic” plan against DPS employees. For roughly similar monthly payments compared to the current plan, district employees under the new Snyder plan would only receive coverage suited for “*those who won't use medical services*.” This is not real coverage: the employees and their family members would receive better medical care while unemployed, qualifying for state Medicaid. Instead of offering a plan to cover the diverse needs of district employees, Snyder and Earley decided to offer a plan that will not satisfy *any* medical needs. If they truly could not afford the current plan (and they can afford much better than what we have), they might simply have raised the premiums—but their real plan is effectively to *deny* us health care, and to drive out the teachers and staff by this sordid tactic.

The Real Plan: Rigging the “Competition” by Destroying Public Schools

Snyder and Earley are trying to force the majority of teachers and employees to leave the public schools and apply for jobs in *charters*. Almost any standard health plan—including the merger plans offered by charter schools—would be better than what is being proposed. The charter schools have never been genuinely competitive with the public schools, but the current attack is designed to compensate for that. While the profit-making charter companies are too busy stealing from the taxpayers to provide a decent education or decent working conditions, the Governor is trying to rig the system to help the charters “compete.” The timing of the current proposal is also deliberate: soon enough to give teachers a chance to find charter jobs over the summer, late enough to limit the amount of protest that is possible. That is, in part, why we must take mass action *now*, and not wait until the fall.

While school closures, cutbacks, and soaring class size have served to drive out thousands of Detroit students, the attack on health care is designed to drive out everyone else. The real intentions of the attack on our health care are the same as the intentions of the district-splitting plan that Snyder announced in April. Snyder is trying to dismantle the public schools and convert DPS into a charter district. This plan was already implemented in Highland Park. There, a charter company, the Leona Group, was given control over the schools while the debt was split into a separate enti-

ty. The Leona Group shut down the only public high school and replaced it with a charter. In late May, the Leona Group announced that it will close down the charter high school at the end of the school year this June, leaving Highland Park students with no high school to attend. The Emergency Manager there has made arrangements with Detroit and other districts to take over the education of the students. That is the Snyder plan in a nutshell: Highland Park went from having a failing *public* high school, to having a failing *charter* high school, to having *no* high school.

The attack on health care is also a symptom of the weakness of the whole Snyder program and state takeover. The current Snyder plan to split DPS does not have the support of either political party in the state legislature, and it would only exacerbate the ongoing financial crisis. Moreover, the imposition of a charter district would actually require the willingness of charter companies to operate the schools—the example of Highland Park shows that the Leona group was not able to continue business there, in spite of the fact that the district had split off the debt. Therefore, Snyder is looking to push his agenda by using more immediate, despoic means. Snyder is weak—he has created a crisis that he cannot resolve, and all of his attempted solutions keep making the crisis even bigger.

We Can Win! Join this Fight! Stand Up for Public Education in Detroit!

Teachers, principals, staff, and students: *all* of DPS should organize to march in Lansing on June 10. We do not need to accept the end of health care in our schools. We can save public education in our city.

We can win by turning to our collective strength as a union. In 2012, the DDOT bus drivers defeated a massive route-cut proposal by walking off the job for three days—by the third day, the drivers had successfully rallied the community, and because of their bold action, over one billion dollars was “found” to stop the cuts. Again, less than a year ago, when Snyder threatened to slash teacher pay by ten percent, teachers rallied and defeated the attack—the money was found and our own initiative saved our paychecks. We can defeat this new attack, as well, but only if we organize to build the fight against it. Additionally, the DFT will pursue legal injunctive measures, as well, but these measures can get tied up in the courts without a strong movement to ensure victory on all fronts. This attack is a challenge to all district employees. Answer this challenge with the same compassion and commitment that you have given to our DPS students: “We will fight to save public education in Detroit! And we are taking our fight to Lansing!”

Organize Your School to Join the March in Lansing

Contact event organizers at (313) 806-1485 or (313) 980-7075

Detroit Federation of Teachers, AFT Local 231 AFL-CIO, 7700 Second Ave., Detroit, MI 48202, Website: dft231.com