



Schools and Communities United

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October 1, 2014

Alderman Michael Murphy
President, Milwaukee Common Council
Chairman, Steering and Rules Committee
City Hall, Room 205
200 E. Wells St.
Milwaukee, WI 53202

President Murphy and Honorable Members of the Common Council:

Please include this letter as testimony to the Steering and Rules Committee on October 2, 2014, and to the Common Council on October 14. (In case of postponement of either meeting, please include this testimony at the subsequent meeting of those bodies in which the issue is taken up.)

Schools and Communities United supports a city ordinance and/or resolution that would prohibit schools chartered by the City of Milwaukee from offering financial incentives to any person or organization for the purpose of enrolling a child or children in those schools.

Moreover, we support the Common Council going on record supporting legislation at the state level prohibiting all schools – private voucher schools, privately run charter schools, and public schools – from offering such financial incentives to enroll.

Such incentives can hurt public schools if the incentives entice parents to leave the public schools. We have heard multiple anecdotes from parents that some voucher and 2R charter schools recruit students for the third Friday count and then “counsel out” the “difficult” ones out when it appears that they are hard to teach. Many of those students then enroll in Milwaukee Public Schools. But because of inconsistency in state law, MPS may not be able to recover the per-pupil funding they have lost to voucher and 2R charter schools until the next school year.

Just prior to the beginning of this new school year, members of our coalition heard a commercial on 860 AM radio in which UWM-chartered Urban Day School promised \$100 to any parent who would newly enroll a child in the school by Friday, September 19 (third Friday). At the same time, members read an advertising flyer in which City-chartered Central City Cyberschool offered an enrollment bonus of \$200.

We believe parents should decide what school they send their children to on the basis of the school's program, not financial incentives. We are pleased that the Common Council is taking up this important issue.

Sincerely,

Larry Hoffman, Ph.D. and Marva Herndon
on behalf of
Schools and Communities United

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Hoffman Marva Herndon".