



Schools and Communities United

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Expand Democracy in Our Communities:

Say no to attacks on our public schools that serve all students

Statement by SCU Steering Committee - August 24, 2015

Schools and Communities United (SCU) stands for expansion of democracy in our state and in our communities, not its reduction.

SCU is proud to participate in a series of press events across the nation commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Voting Rights Act and calling for an end to the takeover of public schools by private operators.

The people of Milwaukee have a long history of supporting public education and demanding our public schools serve all children well. The Civil Rights Movement fought against segregation, for full voting rights and for well-funded desegregated public schools.

Today we see politicians attacking our communities' fundamental democratic rights through voter suppression laws and by removing public institutions from the control of democratically elected boards. These politicians have passed laws to limit the power of the democratically elected Milwaukee County Board, expand the private school voucher program statewide, and establish a new "takeover" school district in Milwaukee. That new district will be under the authority of Milwaukee County Executive Chris Abele and an appointed school commissioner who will have "parallel power" with the democratically elected school board.

The Milwaukee Public Schools is the only institution in the city that has the capacity, commitment and legal obligation to serve all the city's children. And yet the state legislature and certain private interests have focused on reducing funding for MPS (and other public school districts throughout the state), increasing funding for private voucher schools and privately-run charter schools, essentially creating a new TAKEOVER school district.

It is no coincidence that these laws – from restricting voting days and times, to expanding vouchers and privately-run charters, to reducing the power of the Milwaukee County Board to passing a the MPS Takeover law – have targeted Milwaukee. Milwaukee has over 60% of the state's African American population and a large Latino community. MPS is majority African American.

These are attacks on our entire community, our democratic rights, and rights to public institutions that are democratically controlled through elections and the requirements of public accountability and transparency.

We are call on the state to reverse its draconic voter suppression laws, mandate full transparency and accountability for all schools that receive public funds, and rescind the MPS takeover legislation. We further call on County Executive Abele to not appoint a privatization commissioner.

In 2009/2010 politicians attempted a mayoral takeover of the Milwaukee Public Schools. That attempt failed to get sufficient votes in the state legislature, thanks in most part to the resistance in the African American community as exemplified by the broad Coalition to Stop the MPS Takeover.

While we were unable to stop the state legislature from passing the new Takeover legislation, we pledge to organize in our community to stop its implementation.

Furthermore we call on all democracy-loving people to step forward and say "enough." We deserve and will fight to live in a true democracy.

Schools and Communities United is a coalition of 22 community, labor, religious, student and civic organizations that works for the Schools and Communities Our Children deserve.