

MICHIGAN CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION SPECIAL MEETING

Monday, November 23, 2020 ~ 5:00 P.M.

Virtual Meeting: Zoom web conferencing platform; Livestreamed via You Tube and Facebook

In compliance with the State of Michigan's Open Meetings Act, "the minutes must show the date, time, place, members present, members absent, any decisions made at a meeting open to the public, and the purpose(s) for which a closed session is held; the minutes must also include all roll call votes taken at the meeting." The minutes are limited to these requirements and do not reflect all subject matter that occurred during the Commission meeting. Meetings are audio recorded and kept on file with the MDCR.

MINUTES

PRESENT: Commission Chair Stacie Clayton
Commission Vice Chair Laura Reyes Kopack
Commission Secretary Jeff Sakwa
Commissioner Ira Combs, Jr.
Commissioner Regina Gasco Bentley
Commissioner Denise Grim
Commissioner Zenna Elhasan

EXCUSED: Commissioner Portia Roberson

CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

The meeting of the Michigan Civil Rights Commission was called to order by Chair Clayton at 5:10 P.M. Roll Call of the Commissioners was taken by Clerk Dan Levy to determine a quorum. Commissioner Clayton, Commissioner Kopack, Commissioner Sakwa, Commissioner Combs, Commissioner Gasco Bentley, Commissioner Grim, Commissioner Elhasan were present. With seven of eight Commissioners present, quorum requirements were met.

WELCOME

Chair Clayton welcomed participants to the meeting by way of Zoom web conferencing and Facebook / You Tube livestream platforms. Chair Clayton provided an introduction/background on the purpose of this special meeting; to continue the conversation on Education Equity in Michigan.

HOUSEKEEPING RULES FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

Deputy Director Mary Engelman provided the Housekeeping Rules for Public Comment.

GUEST SPEAKER – Brandy Johnson, Governor's Policy Advisor on Education

Ms. Johnson described her role as the Governor's Education Policy Advisor; spoke about the priorities of the Governor's Office concerning Education; discussed the impact of COVID-19 on Education in the State of Michigan. Commissioner Sakwa requested a follow up meeting at a later date.

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**GUEST PRESENTATION – University of Michigan Youth Civil Rights Academy, Anthony Lewis
*Increasing Equity In Education: A Youth Perspective***

Jordan Solomon, Senior, Grosse Pointe North High School
Presentation: Equity in School Funding

Ms. Solomon presented regarding the funding disparities between school systems based on location; comparing inner city schools to suburban schools in affluent neighborhoods. “Today, I am asking the Michigan Civil Rights Commission to similarly support our efforts toward equitable funding by writing a resolution that would incorporate a weighted funding formula and possible proposal to increase tax revenues through mechanisms such as a graduated income tax.”

Ely Vasquez, Junior, Detroit Cass Technical High School
Nilay Mistry, Freshman, University of Michigan
Presentation: Police In Schools

Mr. Vasquez and Ms. Mistry presented regarding discipline disparities based on racial inequity in schools; schools with predominantly Black and Brown students receive higher levels of discipline, while schools with predominantly White students use lower levels of discipline.

Sunidhi Majalika, Senior, Novi High School
Presentation: Diversifying School Curricula

Ms. Majalika presented regarding the lack of diversity in school curriculum, namely in the areas of History, English, Art and Health.

**PANEL DISCUSSION MODERATED BY VANGUARD PUBLIC AFFAIRS
*“UNDERSTANDING URBAN AND RURAL EDUCATION EQUITY”***

Moderators: TJ Bucholz, Teresa Bingman

Panelists:
Sherry Gay-Dagnogo, State Representative & Detroit School Board Member-Elect

Rep. Gay-Dagnogo spoke on concerns raised in the student panel, regarding inequities in education, school/building environments, and per pupil spending.

Dr. Pamela Pugh, Vice President, State Board of Education

Dr. Pugh spoke regarding the unjust and discriminatory funding practices of the State of Michigan’s education system, and the racial stigma/stereotypes that have come about due to unjust funding.

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David Tebo, Superintendent, Hamilton Community Schools

Superintendent Tebo spoke regarding the disparities that COVID-19 has brought to the forefront, and implicit bias in schools.

Michael Rafferty, President and CEO, New Detroit, A Racial Justice Organization

Mr. Rafferty spoke regarding how systemic racism plays out in education, disparities in funding, standardized testing scores, and day-to-day experiences of students.

(6:24 – Commissioner Combs departed the meeting.)

Chair Clayton indicated the definition of charter schools in the glossary of the **Education Equity in Michigan Report** needed to be revised due to the current definition being inaccurate. The correct definition should read as follows:

“A charter school is a state-supported public school operating under charter contract issued by a public authorizing body. It offers education ranging in Grades K through 12 without charge to students and is funded with tax dollars. They are generally subject to fewer rules and regulations as traditional public schools. It is required to adhere to Michigan statutes and rules for Special Education as well as the federal requirements.”

MOTION: Move to Amend the definition of “charter schools” in the *Education Equity in Michigan Report* glossary.

ROLL-CALL VOTE

Clayton – Y	Combs – Not Present
Kopack – Y	Roberson – Not Present
Sakwa – Y	
Gasco Bentley – Y	
Grim – Y	
Elhasan - Y	

No discussion initiated. On Motion duly made (Gasco Bentley) and supported (Sakwa), the Commission Approved amending the definition of “charter schools” in the glossary of the *Education Equity in Michigan Report*. Motion carried unanimously.

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**PANEL DISCUSSION MODERATED BY VANGUARD PUBLIC AFFAIRS
“CHARTER SCHOOLS ARE PUBLIC SCHOOLS”**

Moderators: TJ Bucholz, Teresa Bingman

Panelists:

Dan Quisenberry, President, Michigan Association of Public School Academies

Mr. Quisenberry spoke regarding the perception of charter schools, and showed a PowerPoint presentation on facts and figures regarding charter school population, and the funding and authoritative differences between charter schools and traditional public schools.

Buzz Thomas, Former State Legislator; Board Chair, Michigan Association of Public School Academies

Mr. Thomas spoke regarding the Commission’s Education Equity Report with regards to charter schools, specifically points that were raised in the report, and how the Commission’s recommendations would impact charter school students.

Destini Caldwell, Student, Jalen Rose Leadership Academy

Ms. Caldwell spoke on her positive experiences as a student at the Jalen Rose Leadership Academy; brought concerns about cutting funding to charter schools and the negative impact it would have on students and learning.

Maurice Morton, CEO, Detroit Academy of Arts and Sciences

Mr. Morton spoke regarding the Commission’s recommendation of three-fourths funding for charter schools in the Education Equity Report, and the impact that funding cuts would have on the students.

Christel Drew, High School Principal, Madison Academy

Ms. Drew spoke regarding distinguishing differences between charter schools and traditional public schools, and that charter schools can offer a more conducive learning environment choice for students, based on their circumstances. Ms. Drew also described the impact of the Flint Water Crisis, and brought concerns regarding funding cuts to charter schools in Flint where special education is needed and would be negatively impacted.

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Lola Hopcraft, Special Education Director, Grand Blanc Academy

Ms. Hopcraft spoke regarding special education state requirements in charter schools, and her work experience in special education in charter schools.

Ali Bazzi, Principal, Star International Academy

Mr. Bazzi spoke regarding funding cuts for charter schools, and the school supplemental supports and programs that would be negatively impacted.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Twomey – Ms. Twomey brought concerns regarding inequities in funding and democracy in charter schools.

Caller (last four digits: 8973) – The caller brought concerns regarding inequities in discipline, high suspension rates in charter schools; retaliation against students and teachers who speak out against bullying.

Nawal Hamadeh – a charter school employee, highlighted positives regarding charter schools; indicated that cutting funding would be unfair to charter school students.

KC – The caller identified as “KC” brought concerns regarding the lack of transparency with funding in charter schools.

Fred Borowski – Mr. Borowski, a charter school administrator highlighted positives regarding charter schools; indicated that all students deserve equal education and equal funding. Mr. Borowski is against cutting funding to charter schools.

Sabrina Khan – Ms. Khan is a college sophomore at Wayne State University who earned a full scholarship while attending Star International Academy, a charter school. Ms. Khan highlighted her positive experiences while attending high school, and is concerned about funding being cut, and other students unable to have similar positive experience if funding is cut.

Rawan Akhdar – Mr. Akhdar is a college sophomore at University of Michigan Ann Arbor who graduated from Star International Academy. Mr. Akhdar highlighted his positive experiences while attending high school, and indicated he has a younger sibling with special needs that now attends Star International Academy. He brought concerns of what will happen if his sibling no longer has access to those resources due to the recommended funding cuts.

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Althea Kyles – Ms. Kyles indicated that she has a special needs child attending a charter school, and brought concerns regarding what will happen if her daughter no longer has access to those resources due to recommended funding cuts.

Kellie – The caller identified as “Kellie” brought concerns regarding choosing a school for her child; their neighborhood public school is low performing; she decided to place her child in a charter school instead that better accommodated her child. Ms. Kellie is against cutting funding to charter schools.

Jalen Rose, Jalen Rose Learning Academy, Detroit – Mr. Rose recorded a video message expressing his concerns regarding the Commission’s recommendation for a 25% funding reduction for charter schools, asking the Commission to reconsider their stance.

NEXT STEPS

Council on Government and Education Equity and Inclusion
MDCR Director James White and MDCR Equity Officer Alfredo Hernandez

Director White indicated that next steps regarding the Commission’s **Education Equity in Michigan Report** will involve support from the Council for Government and Education on Equity and Inclusion. Mr. Hernandez has served in the role of facilitating and advising the Council, and provided information on the purpose and function of the Council, indicating that the Commission’s report directly connects to the work taking place within the Council; they will work towards laying a foundation for increasing equitable access to education in the state of Michigan. Members of the Council were invited to participate virtually this evening; their next meeting is December 11, 2020.

Following discussion regarding whether or not a financial analysis had been done with respect to charter schools and other educational institutions, the following motion was brought forth.

MOTION: Move to Eliminate the 75% funding recommendation for charter schools in the Education Equity in Michigan Report. (Motion made by Commissioner Sakwa, supported by Commissioner Kopack, with the understanding that there be a more thorough financial analysis.)

Following discussion, the Motion was amended by Commissioner Elhasan:

MOTION: Move to conduct a comparison analysis of the funding between charter schools and traditional public schools, keep the Motion on the table pending that analysis, and then move forward with a recommendation.

Following further discussion, the Motion was amended again by Chair Kopack:

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MOTION: Pending a thorough financial review of the budgets and educational system and at that point in time, to reconsider the 75% budget of the charter schools recommendation. Move for a thorough analysis of the funding to be conducted at the time that analysis is completed, then a review of the 75% recommendation for funding for charter schools.

Final Motion after further discussion and amendments:

MOTION: Move for a comparison analysis on the funding between charter schools and traditional public schools.

ROLL-CALL VOTE

Clayton – Y	Combs – Not Present
Kopack – Y	Roberson – Not Present
Sakwa – Y	
Gasco Bentley – Y	
Grim – Y	
Elhasan - Y	

Following discussion, on Motion duly made (Kopack) and supported (Elhasan), the Commission Approved a comparison analysis of the funding between charter schools and traditional public schools. Motion carried unanimously.

Chair Clayton indicated that there’s an additional needed definition change in the **Education Equity in Michigan Report** glossary regarding a bond issue, that says it requires 55% approval in order to pass; it actually is a simple majority that is required to pass.

MOTION: Move to Change the definition of “bond proposal” in the Education Equity in Michigan Report glossary that it is a simple majority to pass instead of 55% to pass.

ROLL-CALL VOTE

Clayton – Y	Combs – Not Present
Kopack – Y	Roberson – Not Present
Sakwa – Y	
Gasco Bentley – Y	
Grim – Y	
Elhasan - Y	

On Motion duly made (Elhasan) and supported (Kopack), the change of definition for “bond proposal” in the glossary was Approved. Motion carried unanimously.

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ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Move to Adjourn. No discussion initiated. On Motion duly made (Kopack) and supported (Elhasan), the Special Meeting of the Michigan Civil Rights Commission was Adjourned at 8:18 P.M. Motion carried unanimously.

The next regular meeting of the Michigan Civil Rights Commission will convene on January 25, 2021 at a time and location to be determined.

MINUTES APPROVED AT JANUARY 25, 2021 MEETING.