

Testimony of Amy Marcaccio Keyzer for Senate Education Committee Hearing of September 28, 2011

Senator Pavlov and honorable members of the Committee, good afternoon. Thank you for this opportunity to share my thoughts about Senate Bill 624 and the Parent Empowerment Education Reform package.

My name is Amy Marcaccio Keyzer, and I come before you as a citizen who is concerned about the future of public education.

I am the parent of two children who are students at Lake Orion High School.

I am the daughter of first-generation Americans for whom English was a second language at home. My parents attended Detroit Public Schools and were the first in their families to attend and graduate from college, Wayne University.

I am a Catholic Christian who is called to embrace the church's teachings on social justice.

I am also a cofounder of Michigan Citizens Advocating for Public Education, a nonpartisan grassroots group that is striving to improve and strengthen our public schools for the benefit of Michigan's children.

I'd like to share a letter I sent on September 8.

Dear Governor Snyder and Legislators,

The government of Michigan is shirking its responsibility to the people of Michigan with the package of education reform bills introduced September 7, 2011.

Under the guise of "parental choice," our legislature is sacrificing the state's children at the altar of the free market, forcing the most vulnerable to compete on an unlevel playing field. We are witnessing nothing less than the dismantling of public education, piece by piece.

In low-performing districts, those parents with the transportation, money, time, and ability can choose to send their child to a school outside of their community. But what about the children who will be left behind, whose parents may not have the means or may not care?

By its Darwinian actions, including lack of adequate funding for public schools, our legislature is dooming these children—and their schools—to failure, with little hope for the future.

Whatever happened to championing the common good? In case you need a refresher course, here's the definition from a Michigan Department of Education resource called *Helping Teachers Teach and Children Learn*, under the heading "Core Values of American Constitutional Democracy":

Common Good: The public or common good requires that individual citizens have the commitment and motivation—that they accept their obligation—to promote the welfare of the community and to work together with other members for the greater benefit of all.

Prosperity will continue to elude Michigan until social and economic justice prevails for *all* of her people, not just the fortunate few.

Thank you for listening.

Sincerely,

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