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## Teachers Criticize Republican Education Proposals

### *Privatization schemes bad for students and public education*

LANSING, MI--Michigan Republican legislators today continued their assault on public education and the men and women who teach our children with a package of radical proposals that would transfer public funding to private profit-seeking entities and implement a "stealth" voucher system even though the proposal was soundly defeated by Michigan voters in 2000.

"As students across Michigan start school this week, they are unfortunately learning the wrong lessons from the legislature," said **David Hecker**, President of the **American Federation of Teachers—Michigan**. "These proposals are not rooted in research about what works to increase student learning, but in partisan ideology. We need our legislators to be focusing on proven strategies to enhance student achievement, not dismantling our public schools and attacking teachers for political gain."

The following proposals were unveiled at a hearing today held by a state Senate education committee:

- **Outsourcing Teachers:** There is no research to suggest that outsourcing teachers to private firms would increase student learning in any way. However, we know that fewer and fewer young people are attracted to the profession. How will we convince the best and brightest to become teachers if we continue degrading their professionalism and making their jobs more precarious?
- **Vouchers:** By requiring financially strapped districts to educate private school students without allocating any funding, legislators are reigniting the battle over vouchers—a proposal voters already decisively defeated at the ballot box. Not only is this an end run around the will of Michigan voters, it is a failed idea, with voucher programs failing to produce achievement gains in Milwaukee, Cleveland, Washington, D.C., and other cities: <http://www.aft.org/pdfs/teachers/vouchertrackrecord0211.pdf>
- **Expanding Charter Schools:** This package includes a number of proposals aimed at increasing the number of charter schools in Michigan (which is already home to the second-most charters in the nation). This would create even more fragmentation and bureaucracy in our educational system at a time when resources are scarce, with no evidence that student learning would increase. The most rigorous evaluation of charter school performance, carried out by a team of Stanford economists, found that only 17% performed better than comparable public schools and 37% performed worse. *CREDO (2009) "Charter School Performance in 16 States"*  
[http://credo.stanford.edu/reports/MULTIPLE\\_CHOICE\\_CREDO.pdf](http://credo.stanford.edu/reports/MULTIPLE_CHOICE_CREDO.pdf)
- **Cyber Schools:** Michigan school districts have been experimenting with online educational options for students for years. Technology has an important role in supporting learning, particularly for non-traditional students, but it is a tool, not a replacement system. We need to study what has worked and expand on those successes, rather than throwing open the floodgates to let anyone with an internet connection open a school.

“Even beyond their ineffectiveness on their own terms, these proposals would lead toward an education system of winners and losers. We need to provide all kids a great education, which will be impossible in a fragmented system that benefits a few and leaves others behind,” said Hecker.

AFT Michigan has proposed a comprehensive platform for improving PreK-12 education by:

- Developing and supporting great teachers;
- Implementing comprehensive teacher evaluation systems;
- Creating a learning environment and well-rounded curriculum;
- Addressing barriers to academic success, like poverty and the lack of quality universal pre-kindergarten; and
- Adequately funding reform strategies targeting identified problems that will reach all children.

The complete platform can be found at: <http://aftmichigan.org/files/prek-12platform2011.pdf>.