



**The Congressional Black Caucus
Engagement Packet on the
Nomination of Betsy DeVos for
Secretary of Education**

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To: Members of the Congressional Black Caucus
From: Chairman Cedric L. Richmond
Date: 1/9/2017
Re: Nomination of Betsy DeVos as Secretary of Education

Elizabeth “Betsy” DeVos has been nominated by President-elect Donald Trump to serve as the next Secretary of the Department of Education. DeVos grew up in Holland, Michigan as the daughter of a businessman whose company employed almost a quarter of the town and was sold for over a billion dollars.¹ She and her family have remained active in the community and have become extremely well-connected in both the business and political world. A politically active billionaire, DeVos has been a key player in state GOP politics, serving as Chair of the Michigan Republican Party twice, from 1996-2000 and 2003-2005.

Both in Michigan and throughout the country, DeVos is recognized as a leading proponent of charter schools and voucher programs and leads several groups that serve as large sources of funding in those efforts. DeVos has never taught in, been an administrator of, or even attended a public school. Instead, she has attended private schools and consistently supported the influence of religion in education. None of these things, in and of themselves, should disqualify DeVos from serving as the Secretary of Education. However, the actions DeVos has taken and the policies she has advocated publicly for run directly counter to the very idea of ensuring that every child has a right to a quality, free education. Of specific concern are DeVos’ desires to gut public education funding and transfer that money to the pockets of private and for-profit organizations and her opposition to any accountability or oversight of those organizations. In places where these types of policies have been implemented, they have clearly been shown to hurt disadvantaged and vulnerable communities the most. In the eyes of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) and its Members, this makes her an unacceptable person to lead the Department of Education.

Vouchers

One of Betsy DeVos’ clearest policy priorities has been her support of vouchers for private and for-profit schools. In 2000, the extended DeVos family spent \$5.6 million on an unsuccessful campaign to amend Michigan’s constitution to allow school vouchers.² This falls in line with President-elect Trump’s proposal to create a \$20 billion federal voucher program, a plan that was drafted with the assistance of a group affiliated with Betsy DeVos.³ These voucher proposals all seek to make taxpayer dollars available as a funding stream for private schools and for-profit companies. This only serves to weaken the public school system while giving private schools a taxpayer-funded bailout and allowing companies to get rich on the taxpayers’ dime.

Not only would taking federal funding away from public schools and giving it to private schools drain resources from the schools that need them the most, research shows that voucher programs actually lead to worse outcomes for students. A study into academic achievement of students in the Louisiana Scholarship Program, the largest existing voucher program, found a significant negative impact of voucher participation for math, reading, science, and social studies scores.⁴ In the first

¹ Biography of Edgar D. Prince http://www.newnetherlandinstitute.org/history-and-heritage/dutch_americans/edgar-d-prince/

² Detroit Free Press, “Betsy DeVos and the twilight of public education” <http://www.freep.com/story/opinion/columnists/stephen-henderson/2016/12/03/betsy-devos-education-donald-trump/94728574/>

³ Politico, “Trump’s education pick says reform can ‘advance God’s Kingdom’” <http://www.politico.com/story/2016/12/betsy-devos-education-trump-religion-232150>

⁴ MIT/NBER Study, “School Vouchers and Student Achievement: First-Year Evidence from the Louisiana Scholarship Program” <http://seii.mit.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/SEII-Discussion-Paper-2015.06-Abdulkadiro%C4%9Flu-Pathak-Walters.pdf>

year, students participating in the program saw their state mathematics test scores fall 24 percentile points below those of their peers who were not awarded a voucher. Their English scores fell 8 percentile points below those of their peers. After the second year, the scholarship students hadn't recovered even to where they began in mathematics. While researchers couldn't rule out the possibility that they returned to baseline in English, they believe that those scores remained lower as well. Meanwhile, their peers who remained in public schools did slightly better.⁵

Oversight and Accountability of Schools

In addition to advocating for expansive voucher programs, Betsy DeVos has spent her career pushing for charter school expansion with little or no oversight or accountability for the tax dollars these schools receive. She led a campaign to prevent any limits on the expansion of even poor-performing charter schools in Michigan, where the state's charter school system has led to poor outcomes for students and communities, especially students of color.

This type of unaccountable expansion and management of charter schools, including for-profit schools, has been shown to result in worse outcomes for students and increase racial segregation in schools. In Michigan, charter schools in general spend more on administration and less in the classroom than traditional districts.⁶ A *Detroit Free Press* analysis based on 2012-13 data found traditional schools spent an average of \$6,985 per student in the classroom compared to \$4,893 spent by charter schools. Administration costs \$1,090 per student at the average traditional school compared with \$1,894 in charter schools.⁷

Despite the increase in cost, the charter school model in Michigan has not led to better outcomes for students. An analysis of 2014 test scores adjusted for student poverty levels found that some charters were among the highest-performing schools in the state, but even more were among the worst.⁸ About 31 percent of charters were in the bottom quarter in academic performance when poverty was taken into account, compared with 24 percent of traditional public schools.⁹ In 2000, Michigan students scored above the national average in 4th grade math and English and 8th grade math and English on the National Assessment of Educational Progress test, known as the nation's report card. By 2015, Michigan was below the national average in 4th grade math and English and 8th grade math, and was at the national average in 8th grade English. Michigan is ranked in the bottom 10 states for fourth-grade reading, a key indicator for educational success.¹⁰

The Michigan system has also led to troubling increases in educational segregation. In the 2009-10 school year, roughly 64 percent of choice students across the state moved to a less diverse district. That rate is now approaching 70 percent.¹¹ The number of school districts statewide where fewer

⁵Education Research Alliance Study, "How Has the Louisiana Scholarship Program Affected Students?"

<http://educationresearchallianceola.org/files/publications/ERA-Policy-Brief-Public-Private-School-Choice-160218.pdf>

⁶ Detroit Free Press, "Michigan Spends \$1B on Charter Schools But Fails to Hold Them Accountable"

<http://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/2014/06/22/michigan-spends-1b-on-charter-schools-but-fails-to-hold/77155074/>

⁷ Detroit Free Press, "Michigan Spends \$1B on Charter Schools But Fails to Hold Them Accountable"

<http://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/2014/06/22/michigan-spends-1b-on-charter-schools-but-fails-to-hold/77155074/>

⁸ Bridge, "Betsy DeVos's Michigan legacy" <http://bridgemi.com/2016/12/betsy-devoss-michigan-legacy/>

⁹MLive.com, "Betsy DeVos's Michigan Legacy" http://www.mlive.com/politics/index.ssf/2016/12/betsy_devoss_michigan_legacy.html

¹⁰MLive.com, "Betsy DeVos's Michigan Legacy" http://www.mlive.com/politics/index.ssf/2016/12/betsy_devoss_michigan_legacy.html

¹¹ Bridge Magazine, "Betsy DeVos and the Segregation of School Choice" <http://bridgemi.com/2016/11/betsy-devos-and-the-segregation-of-school-choice/>

than half the students are white rose from 38 a decade ago to 55 last year. The number of charter schools where students of color are in the majority went from 119 in 2005 to 182 last year.¹²

Conclusion

The results for the students and families in Michigan speak for themselves. The education policies that Betsy DeVos is committed to advancing have failed the very people they were supposed to help. President-elect Trump has already proposed a \$20 billion voucher program that would take money out of the public schools that need it the most. In nominating DeVos, the President-elect has demonstrated his commitment to pursuing policies that will be undermine our public education system and make it harder for all children to receive a high-quality education.

¹² Bridge Magazine, "Betsy DeVos and the Segregation of School Choice" <http://bridgemi.com/2016/11/betsy-devos-and-the-segregation-of-school-choice/>

Congressional Black Caucus The Nomination of Elizabeth “Betsy” DeVos For Secretary of Department of Education

The nomination of Elizabeth “Betsy” DeVos to lead the Department of Education comes as a great concern because her policies have the potential to fundamentally weaken the U.S. public school system. DeVos has been a long-time advocate for defunding public schools and establishing a for-profit model for education. The guiding principles underlying DeVos’ strategy for education have been proven ineffective and put kids at a greater disadvantage. The nomination of Betsy DeVos signals that President-elect Donald Trump plans to undermine the foundation of America’s education system by working to eliminate public schools and transform the federal government’s role in education.

Betsy DeVos’ Record on Michigan Schools

The state of Michigan’s public school system has experienced significant decline academically and financially since the implementation of an education strategy shaped by Betsy DeVos.

- The President of Michigan’s State Board of Education has warned against the nomination of DeVos, stating, “[DeVos’] agenda is to break the public education system, not educate kids, and replace it with a for-profit model.”
- Charter school advocates have publicly recognized Detroit’s charter school system as one of the biggest school reform disasters in the country. Betsy DeVos was one of the lead advocates and architects of the current charter school structure in Detroit.
- DeVos has a history of hostility toward teachers unions, and has publically accused them of standing in the way of educational advancement.
- The academic standing of Michigan’s charter school students compared with peers in other states has dropped dramatically since DeVos established an expansion of charter schools ran by for-profit companies.

Betsy DeVos’ Record on School Privatization and Voucher Programs

Betsy DeVos supports using taxpayer dollars to fund voucher programs for students to attend charter, private, and for-profit schools managed by private companies. Vouchers drain public schools of needed funding and have been proven to lead to negative outcomes for students participating in voucher programs.

- In 2000, DeVos and her extended family spent \$5.6 million on an unsuccessful campaign to amend Michigan’s constitution to allow for school vouchers.
- President-elect Trump’s proposal to create a \$20 billion federal voucher program was created by a group affiliated with Betsy DeVos.
- Research has shown that students who received vouchers saw their test scores decline in the subjects of math and English.

Betsy DeVos’ Opposition to Transparency and Accountability

Transparency and accountability are critical to a robust education system, and Betsy DeVos has spent a significant amount of money and time to curtail the level of transparency required for charter and private schools to be successful.

- In the state of Michigan, charter schools spend more money on administration and less in the classroom than traditional public school districts.
- The Michigan charter school system has led to troubling increases in educational segregation. Roughly 64 percent of choice students across the state moved to a less diverse district during the 2009-2010 academic year. Currently, that rate is approaching 70 percent.

- DeVos led a campaign to prevent any limits on the expansion of poor-performing charter schools in Michigan, where the state's charter school system has led to poor outcomes for students and communities, especially students of color.

What are your specific issues with Betsy DeVos?

- Betsy DeVos has spent a great deal of time and money advocating for the dismantling of the public school system and replacing it with a for-profit model for education.
- DeVos has fought to dissolve a system that is critical to our democracy and one she knows absolutely nothing about. DeVos has no prior experience with the public school system as a student, teacher, administrator, or parent.
- If nominated, DeVos would be the first Secretary of Education without any prior experience in public schools, including early childhood education and higher education.
- Based on the programs DeVos supports, we strongly believe that her strategy for education is ineffective and will put the children we serve at a greater disadvantage.
- Education leaders from the state of Michigan have publically spoken against the nomination of DeVos, warning that the state has experienced a significant financial and academic decline since implementing an educational strategy formulated by DeVos.

DeVos has been a strong proponent of Charter Schools and Voucher Programs. What are your thoughts regarding her record on alternative education?

- Alternative Education in itself can be a positive addition to traditional public schools. However, DeVos wants to use taxpayer dollars to fund voucher programs that will allow students to attend private and for-profit charter schools.
- Voucher programs take much needed funds from public schools, and current data show that voucher programs have negative outcomes for students participating.
- DeVos has a history of donating large amounts of money to support voucher programs that have been proven unsuccessful. In 2000, DeVos and her family spent \$5.6 million on an unsuccessful campaign to amend Michigan's constitution to allow for school vouchers.
- The programs that DeVos supports have been proven to disproportionately impact vulnerable communities and counter the belief that every student has the right to an equal education.

What are your thoughts on DeVos' Stance on School Oversight and Accountability?

- DeVos' record proves that she will not ensure oversight, accountability and transparency as Secretary of Education.
- DeVos has been a strong advocate of charter school expansion, even when schools have underperformed. She led the campaign to expand charter schools in Detroit that were poor

performing, which led to negative outcomes for students and the community, especially students of color.

- The Michigan Charter School system, designed by DeVos, has led to troubling increases in educational segregation. In 2010, 64 percent of Michigan's charter school students moved to districts with less diversity. In 2015, that number rose to 70 percent.

Considering you are in the minority how do you plan to successfully block his appointment?

- We in the CBC have never been afraid of a fight and just because the odds are long is no reason to back down.
- What we will make clear is that Betsy DeVos has advocated for and in some cases implemented policies that are in direct conflict with the values of the CBC, its members, and the people we represent.
- We will continue to be extremely vocal and visible in our opposition to put pressure on every Senator to use their vote to reject this harmful ideology and ensure our constituents are aware of who has their best interests in mind.

What do Trump's nominees say about Trump and how he will address needs within communities of color?

- What we're seeing in the nominees that the President-elect has put forward are the same concerns we had throughout his campaign.
- These nominees confirm the fact that there is a very high level of insensitivity towards minorities, women, and people of color within his incoming administration.
- In nominating Betsy DeVos, President-elect Trump has sent a clear signal that he wants to eliminate public schools and transform the federal government's role in education.

Sample Social Media Posts: Betsy DeVos

Tweets

- "DeVos' agenda is to break the public education system, not to educate kids" - President of Michigan's State Board of Education #DenyDevos (1 Character Remaining)
- We cannot allow someone deemed the "Architect of the For-Profit Charter" to be in control of our children's education #KidsNotCash (8 Characters Remaining)
- If DeVos couldn't advance the educational system in Detroit, how will she ensure educational advancement for children everywhere? (10 Characters remaining)
- We can't afford to have an Education Secretary who has a hostile attitude towards teachers and unions #DenyDeVos (26 Characters Remaining)



D E N Y D E V O S

**64% of choice students across
Michigan have moved to a less
diverse district during the 2009-
2010 academic year.**



Facebook

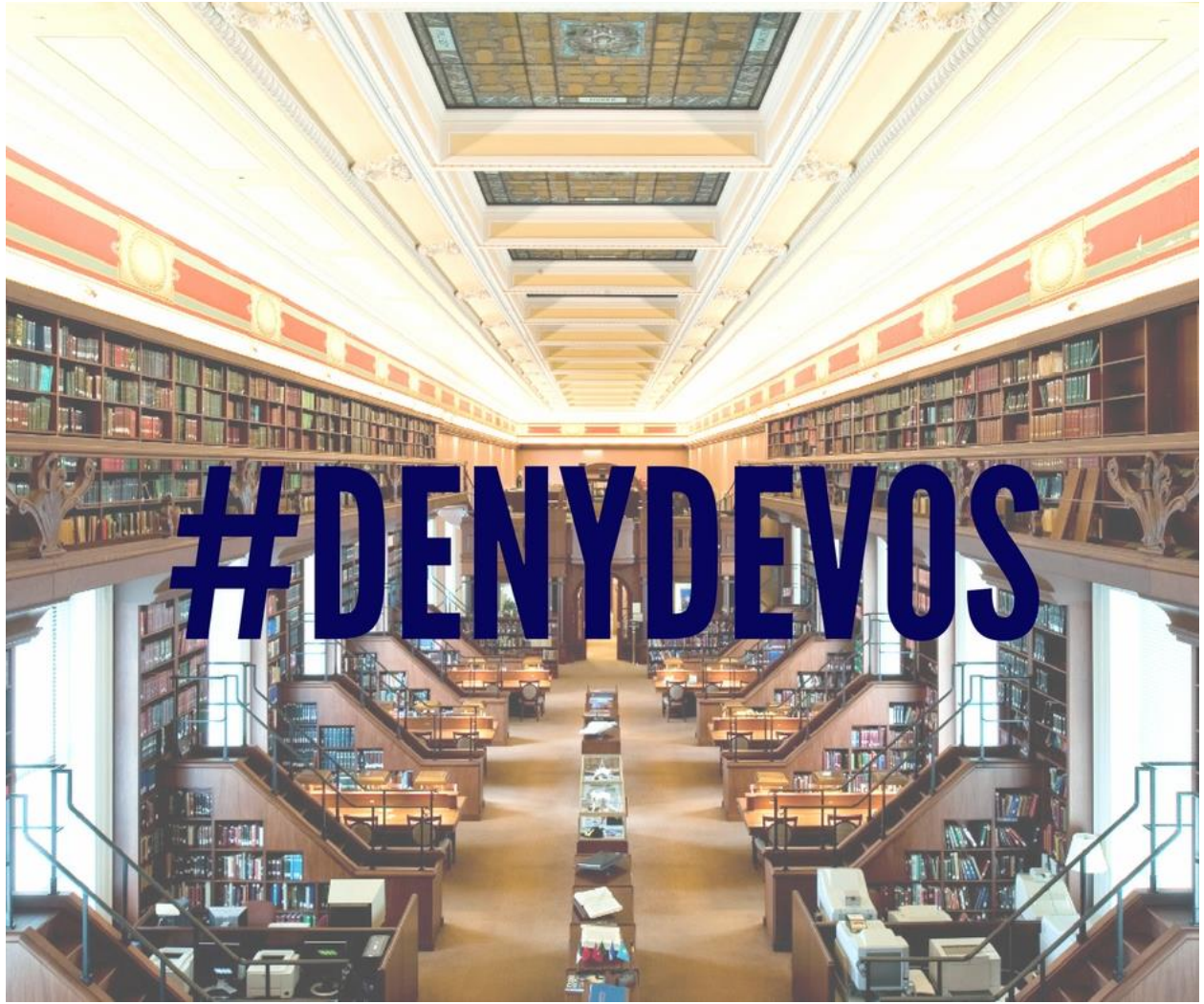
- We cannot afford to allow someone who has been deemed the “Architect of the For-Profit Charter” in Detroit control how states will receive funding for our children’s education. She has consistently fought against public schools and continues advocate for the implementation of a for-profit educational system.
- Betsy DeVos has proved time and time again that she is not concerned with the educational advancement of students in Detroit. Instead, her interest lie with defunding public schools and being the architect of failed for-profit charter systems. The President of Michigan's State Board of Education has noted "DeVos' agenda is to break the public education system, not educate kids, and replace it with a for-profit model." If she's thought of in that manner in her own state, do we really need her as Secretary of Education? #KidsNotCash
- The Senate must reject the nomination of Betsey DeVos because if she is confirmed, she will continue to advocate for school voucher programs and the failed for-profit charter school system. For example, DeVos spent \$5.6 million of her own dollars on an unsuccessful campaign to amend Michigan’s constitution to allow for school vouchers. Imagine what she will do with federal funds at her disposable. #DenyDeVos

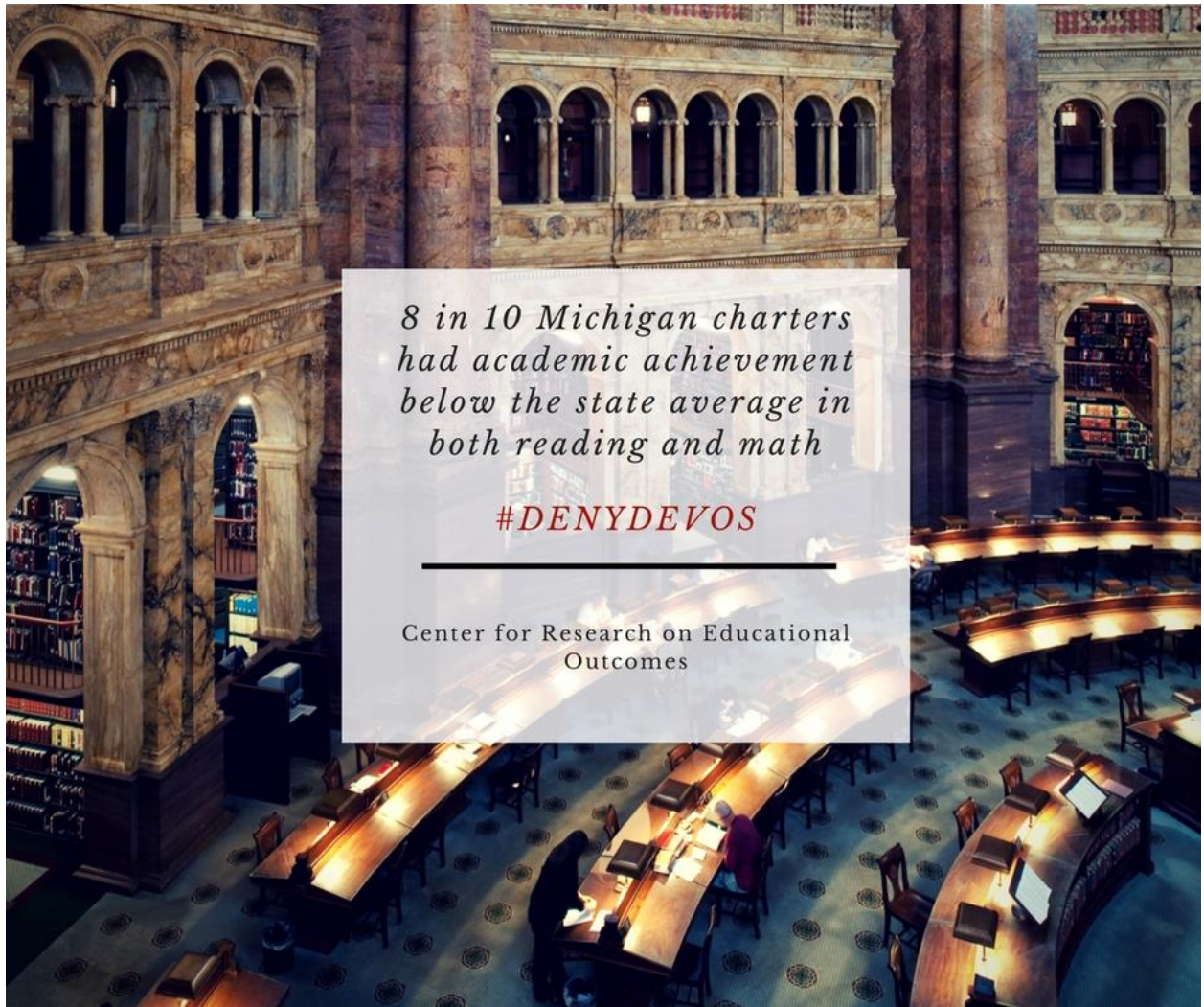
Hash tags:

#DenyDeVos

#KidsNotCash







*8 in 10 Michigan charters
had academic achievement
below the state average in
both reading and math*

#DENYDEVOS

Center for Research on Educational
Outcomes