

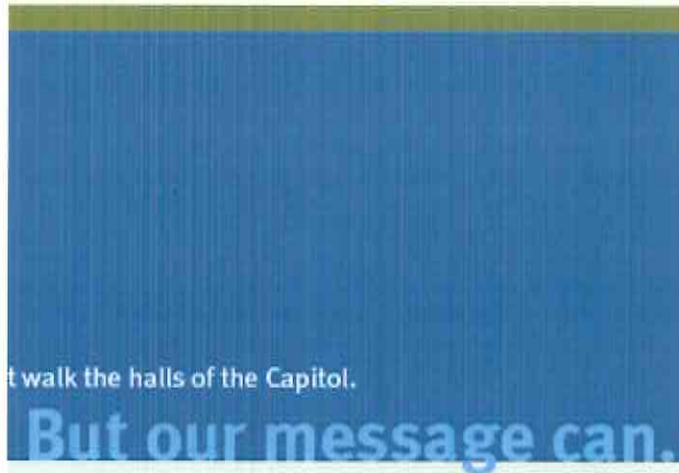
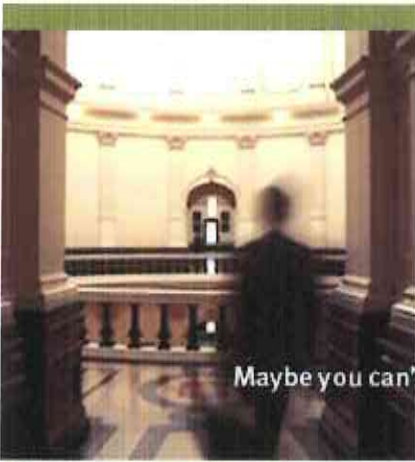
## Karen Hill

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**From:** Karen Hill  
**Sent:** Friday, November 30, 2012 11:33 AM  
**To:** Charlie Glaes; Steve Goss  
**Subject:** FW: Quick update on the EAA bills and related legislation

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**From:** Steven Norton [mailto:snorton@miparentsforschools.org]  
**Sent:** Friday, November 30, 2012 11:31 AM  
**To:** Karen Hill  
**Subject:** Quick update on the EAA bills and related legislation



Quick update on the EAA bills and related legislation

Friends,

I wanted to send you a quick update on what's going on in Lansing and elsewhere on the Education Achievement Authority and other key issues.

**First off, your voices are definitely being heard.** Many legislators who might be expected to support the EAA bills (HB 6004/SB 1358) are having serious doubts. They are trying to find ways to tweak the bill to make it more acceptable, and some of those proposed changes are significant. While we appreciate their efforts to respond to concerns raised by the public, we also still believe that the EAA approach to "fixing" struggling schools is fundamentally flawed.

**If you haven't yet contacted your legislator, this would be a great time.**

<http://capwiz.com/miparentsforschools/issues/alert/?alertid=62182501>

### News you can use

I know this is late notice, but there will be an interesting online debate today at Noon (!) between State Board of Education president John Austin and Lansing lawyer (and drafter of

the EAA, increased charters and Oxford Foundation school aid rewrite proposals) Richard McLellan. If you have a chance to check it out over your sandwich, learn more here: [http://www.mlive.com/education/index.ssf/2012/11/school\\_education\\_reform\\_live\\_c.html](http://www.mlive.com/education/index.ssf/2012/11/school_education_reform_live_c.html)

There is also a *fantastic* letter from Michigan parents, educators and school officials to President Obama and US Secretary of Education Arne Duncan asking them to reconsider the EAA's status as a finalist in the latest Race to the Top funding round. The EAA was the only entity in Michigan to make it to the finalist round. What the letter describes is very disturbing. This is a must read!

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/wp/2012/11/30/michigan-coalition-opposes-race-to-top-finalist-in-letter-to-obama-duncan>

**Thank you for all your help!** I think we have finally sparked the statewide conversation on public education that we've needed for years.

Best regards,

Steve Norton  
Executive Director  
Michigan Parents for Schools

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## Michigan coalition opposes Race to Top finalist in letter to Obama, Duncan

By Valerie Strauss , Updated: November 30, 2012

A large coalition of Michigan parents, PTA leaders, K-12 teachers, professors and others — including the superintendent of Detroit Public Schools — sent a letter (see text below) to President Obama and Education Secretary Arne Duncan protesting the selection of a new education entity as a finalist in the latest edition of Race to the Top, the administration's signature education initiative.

The U.S. Education Department this week [announced 61 finalists](#) in the latest Race to the Top edition, this one designed to award a total of nearly \$400 million in federal funds to school districts that agree to implement specific school reforms. The list of finalists was somewhat unusual, given that it was intended for districts but a few individual public charter schools won, as well as charter school networks. In Michigan, the only finalist named was the "[Education Achievement Authority](#)," a newly created entity that will operate the lowest performing 5 percent of schools in Michigan. The state government had applied to three previous rounds of Race to the Top, not winning any of them.

Here's the letter that explains why so many people in Michigan oppose the naming of the EAA as a Race to the Top finalist:

Dear President Obama and Secretary Duncan:

We are encouraged that education continues to occupy such an important space in the national agenda, and we thank you for your efforts in promoting dialogue around this critical issue. We are writing to share our deep concerns with the possible awarding of Race to the Top funds to the "Education Achievement Authority" or EAA in the state of Michigan.

The EAA, a "state reform" district modeled after the problematic New Orleans Recovery School District (RSD), was established through an August 2011 interlocal agreement between then-Emergency Manager of Detroit Public Schools Roy Roberts and Eastern Michigan University under the former Public Act 4 of 2011 ("The Emergency Manager Law"), an act that was repealed by the Michigan electorate in the November 6 election. Shortly thereafter, the Detroit Board of Education voted to disband the EAA and to sever ties with Eastern Michigan University. Despite the voice of the electorate, our Michigan state legislature is pressing forward with bills

during the lame duck session that would codify the EAA into state law.

We oppose the establishment of the EAA and ask that you stand in support of Michigan voters who are deeply concerned with its impact on our children's education and on our rights as citizens to advocate for them. We urge that you reconsider any inclination toward funding this EAA district for several important reasons:

1. The EAA has only been in operation for a few months and has no objective, external data attesting to its record of success. The Chancellor of the EAA has chosen to use an instructional learning platform modeled after the "Student Centered" schools he spearheaded in a previous school district. This learning initiative did not deliver the results his former district had hoped to see and a press release was issued to explain the disappointing results (<http://www.kctv5.com/story/15208161/dismal-test-scores-for-kc-district>). As an article published in the October 3, 2012 edition of *Education Week* by *Detroit Free Press* reporter Pratt explained:

*Mr. Covington implemented a system similar to the EAA's student-centered learning in 10 schools in Kansas City, Mo., where he was superintendent before coming to Michigan in 2011. **But Kansas City scrapped the teaching method this school year—two years after it started—because of mixed test results**, said Andre Riley, a spokesman for the district. He said the new superintendent there wants to take the district in a different direction. ([http://pages.nxtbook.com/nxtbooks/epe/ew\\_10032012/offline/epe\\_ew\\_10032012.pdf](http://pages.nxtbook.com/nxtbooks/epe/ew_10032012/offline/epe_ew_10032012.pdf))*

2. Unlike the other school districts in Michigan, there is to date no external auditing for quality assurance in the EAA, and this was reflected in the language of the original twin bills, SB 1358 and HB 6004, introduced during the lame duck session. Without a metric that is not internal to the EAA, how will program effectiveness be measured? How will "persistently low achieving" schools that are delivered to the EAA based on Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) scores exit from the EAA without a detailed, transparent rubric?

3. The EAA receives public tax dollars but is not subject to oversight by Michigan's elected State Board of Education. This "new form" of school governance is particularly disturbing in its suppression of parent/community participation in the school decision-making process as there is no elected school board. Installing an appointed Chancellor who only reports to the Governor effectively disenfranchises the citizens of Michigan.

4. The EAA purports to serve the neediest of students through its stated mission of capturing only the bottom 5% of schools or persistently low achieving schools (PLA) from the state's PLA list. This past summer, however, the EAA actively recruited students from outside of the initial 15 EAA schools (formerly DPS schools) it was given to operate. A number of Detroit parents were contacted and provided a workshop where they were briefed on how to canvass neighborhoods to "recruit" students for EAA enrollment. They were provided with FAQ, Scripts, talking points, door hangers, and EAA t-shirts. Promotional door hangers especially made for the Highland Park School District explained that "Since the EAA is an open school

district children in Highland Park are welcomed to attend EAA schools.” Advertising materials came complete with enrollment hotlines [see enclosures]. These actions would seem to contradict the insistence that the EAA is not about “empire building.” What we appear to have in the EAA is a separate, unregulated district that receives public funds and works in competition rather than in cooperation with our elected State Board of Education.

As citizens who care deeply about the future of our children, we ask that our concerns be respected. We ask that this yet unproven EAA campaign not be funded by Race to the Top dollars. What would truly help Michigan is for the funding to be used to enfranchise our families, schools, and communities to engage in real reforms that benefit Michigan’s children and that reflect the will of her citizens. We hold great hope that we will be authentic partners in a larger dialogue, and one that will have the courage to include honest conversations about the kind of contextual education reform needed to make meaningful change not only for Michigan but the nation as a whole.

Respectfully yours,

Shaton Berry

President

Michigan PTA

Sandra York

Executive Director

Michigan PTA

Teresa Marhofer, Parent

President Elect

Michigan PTA

Ruthann Jaquette, Parent

Michigan PTA

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