

February 15, 2018

TO: Michigan House of Representatives Committee on Elections and Ethics

FROM: Sherry A. Wells, BA Educ., JD, Ferndale MI

RE: HBs 5515, 5516, 5533, HJR DD and HJR EE *OPPOSE*

As a candidate for a position on the State Board of Education, I researched its history.

Michigan's 1835 Constitution created the first independent state school administrator in the U.S. The 1963 Constitution created the State Board of Education. The governor is ex officio and nothing more.

No commission or other body is needed to study our education system. The Board does that. The Board was also charged to "advise the legislature as to the financial requirements." The legislators consistently underfund our schools.

The first school in Ferndale was on land donated by a farmer. Families built the school and hired the teachers. Local districts know what unique challenges each faces—whether transportation and poverty issues in both rural and urban districts or asthma from an incinerator. The people must not be further removed from seeing to our children's needs.

I have attended several State Board of Education meetings. The staff are sincerely concerned and working hard to help our children, studying best practices, despite Common Core and whatever "new" system that is pressed upon them, primarily to the benefit of large corporations.

When did Michigan schools begin to get behind?

When Gov. Engler pulled the Office of School Reform from the State Board. The courts overturned that, but Gov. Snyder pulled it out again. When Gov. Engler instituted the acceptance of charter schools and "schools of choice" in 1994.

When the State took over the Detroit Public Schools, in 1999, despite—or more likely because of—its fund surplus and student achievement above the state average. And permitted its democratically elected board to function for less than 3 years of the last 17 years.

When Gov. Granholm, in 2010, appointed the first Emergency Financial Manager over the Detroit Public Schools, and started the process of E. M.s in only districts with minority and low-income students. How well have Emergency Managers worked in Flint and Detroit?

I do not believe an appointed Board can do a better job. We, the people, need to remain in charge of who works for the education of our populace. And instead of these, we need the bills, introduced in January of last year, to bring Michigan up to most states in giving its people better access to the election process, to be reported out of committee and favorably.

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