

## Welcoming Secretary DeVos PAA-style



PAA sent the following letter to Education Secretary Betsy DeVos to welcome her to the position and to raise some concerns about her intentions, especially in light of the parent town hall meeting she and President Trump held past week. Of

the 7 parents who were invited, three were home schoolers, three were charter and private school parents and two were home schoolers. We suggested that they really should call PAA so that they can hear from a somewhat more representative group of parents.

We are not sure if she will get our letter – there is no fax number or email address listed on the ed.gov site, and when we called her office, we got a message that the office was “not available.”

Here's what we wrote:

February 23, 2017

Dear Secretary DeVos:

Parents Across America (PAA) congratulates you on your appointment as U.S. Secretary of Education. You have been entrusted with a position of great importance and responsibility. One way that you can be sure of carrying out this role effectively is to listen carefully to the voices of the parents who have the most at stake in public education.

PAA is a broad network of active public school parents who work together to support and strengthen our nation's public schools. PAA currently has 50 chapters in 26 states. We are diverse regionally, economically, and culturally, but with a common mission: to assure that all children have access to a high-quality public school education.

We opposed many of the policies and practices of the Obama/Duncan administration, which yielded too many unfortunate results including the misuse and overuse of standardized tests, the irresponsible proliferation of charter schools without adequate oversight, and the pressuring of states to adopt what amounted to an illegal national curriculum. Frankly, PAA was not in

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Parents Across America is run by parents for parents, and we depend on contributions from supporters of public education like you. Please help us continue our work to secure a quality public education for all children!



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support of your appointment, either. We have a Michigan affiliate which shared information with us about your track record of promoting vouchers and fighting charter school accountability measures there, and about your overall lack of support for public schools.

Hoping for the best, nonetheless, we were especially disappointed to learn that one of your first activities as Education Secretary was to hold a “town hall” meeting with President Trump, ostensibly to listen to parents. But the invited panel included only one public school parent – the other parents were either homeschoolers or private or charter school parents, people who represent a very small segment of the parents of school-aged children in the U.S.

In fact, polls and surveys consistently show that the choice of most U.S. parents is to send their child to a high-quality neighborhood school with adequate resources. Most parents in these surveys expressed a strong preference for providing additional support to struggling schools rather than privatizing or closing them. Parents are also becoming more and more aware that charter schools are no better overall than traditional public schools, while serving fewer children with special needs. And parents overwhelmingly oppose vouchers. It is incumbent on you to listen to a more representative group of parents than the group that was convened last week, so that you are getting a fuller picture of our concerns and priorities.

PAA would be very happy to speak with you or meet with you at your convenience. We will continue to share our thoughts and ideas with you via fax and the internet, and begin by attaching our position paper, “What Makes a Quality Education?”

Thank you for your attention.



POSTED ON **FEBRUARY 23, 2017** BY **JULIE WOESTEHOFF** POSTED  
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