



October 26, 2015 - MAPSA Condemns 'Irresponsible and Reckless' Commentary on Charter Schools by Michigan Radio's Jack Lessenberry

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LANSING, Michigan (October 26, 2015) – The following statement can be attributed to Dan Quisenberry, President of the Michigan Association of Public School Academies (MAPSA), the state charter school association. It references commentary by Jack Lessenberry headlined "Shame on the charter schools" that appeared on the Michigan Radio website on Friday, Oct. 23, and aired on Michigan Public Radio.

"As the head of the journalism department at Wayne State University and a political analyst for Michigan Radio, Jack Lessenberry has built a reputation as one of the state's leading journalists. He did great harm to that reputation with his commentary last week entitled 'Shame on the charter schools,' in which he called for every charter school in the state to be closed. It was filled with errors of fact that could have been easily verified, and reached conclusions that were baseless and unfounded.

"It was a grossly irresponsible and reckless piece of journalism. He owes an apology to the tens of thousands of education professionals who work in Michigan's charter schools, and to the hundreds of thousands of parents who have made this educational choice for their children. It's his right to insult them – which is exactly what he did – but when he bases those insults on erroneous information, he owes them an apology.

"In his column, Mr. Lessenberry called for every charter school in the state to be shut down immediately. He told more than 10,000 teachers and 1,500 administrators that they should be out of a job immediately. He told 150,000 students that their schools are garbage, and that they need to leave those schools and go back to their local traditional public schools immediately. He just told hundreds of thousands of parents that they made a bad choice. He did all that without ever having visited most or all of those schools. That's the very definition of irresponsible and reckless.

"As a professor of journalism, Mr. Lessenberry surely teaches his students that they have to be accountable for their work, and that they have to issue a correction when they make a mistake. As of Monday morning, Mr. Lessenberry had yet to do so. Among other things, he was flat-out wrong when he asserted that the Aisha Shule/W.E.B. Dubois Preparatory Academy in Detroit "opened two years ago and shut down after six weeks." In fact, the school opened as a charter in 1995 – not two years ago – and it closed in 2013. That's 18 years, not six weeks. That's hardly a small error, and Mr. Lessenberry has yet to correct it.

"It's distressing that someone with Jack Lessenberry's resume and background would be so reckless with the facts. If his goal was to level a shotgun blast at the charter school community with no regard for the truth, he succeeded. We would hope that he holds himself to a higher standard, though. We await his corrections, and we await his apology."

The Michigan Association of Public School Academies advances quality education through choice and innovation. MAPSA has been the unified voice of the public charter school movement in Michigan since 1996. MAPSA represents more than

150,000 students, 10,000 teachers, dozens of authorizers and more than 50 education service providers working in 305 public charter schools in the state. MAPSA assists the state's public charter schools in their mission to deliver achievement, choice and accountability through advocacy, communications and technical assistance. For additional information, please visit www.charterschools.org.