



November 15, 2017

Missouri State Board of Education  
205 Jefferson Street  
P.O. Box 480  
Jefferson City, MO 65102-0480

Dear State Board of Education Members,

We find the latest developments regarding the Missouri State Board of Education to be puzzling and deeply troubling. During our tenure in the Missouri General Assembly and in our role as chairs of the various education committees, we have been extremely impressed with the passion that Dr. Margie Vandeven possesses for Missouri students and our state's public education system.

Dr. Vandeven has worked diligently to build relationships with the General Assembly, educators, parents, and the business community. Given her success in these efforts, recent rumblings regarding any action to be taken by the State Board of Education to replace the Commissioner are quite perplexing. Five newly appointed, yet unconfirmed, board members have not had ample time to learn the complexities of public education, much less be able to make informed personnel decisions based upon their own experiences in working with the Department.

Currently, Missouri benefits from a Commissioner that has a "heart for kids" and understands the intricacies of public education in our state. Commissioner Vandeven has already proven to be the type of "change" leader Missouri needs to move forward. Her leadership style makes her the right person to lead the department. Whether in the public or private sector, good policymaking stems from strong leadership and evidence-based decision-making. Recent developments appear to move away from these best practices. The continuation of these efforts will only create division and distract from several important legislative initiatives that are set to dominate the upcoming session.

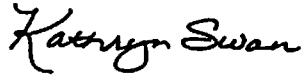
As we work to address the recent development of a new Missouri School Improvement Plan, create a statewide virtual course access program, increase accountability on charter schools, and implement and fund a statewide early childhood education program, it is imperative that our General Assembly, the Executive branch, the State Board of Education, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and our schools work collaboratively to improve educational opportunities for all Missouri children.

Nearly one million children in our state depend on us making good public policy and efforts to replace Commissioner Vandeven only distract from the issues that we must work together to address.

We urge the State Board of Education to abandon efforts to remove Commissioner Vandeven.



Sen. Gary Romine  
Senate Education Committee, Chair



Rep. Kathy Swan  
House Elementary & Secondary Education Committee, Chair



Rep. Lyle Rowland  
House Subcommittee on Appropriations – Education, Chair

cc: Governor Eric Grietens