
Common Council President

15th District Alderman



Willie L. Hines, Jr.
City of Milwaukee Common Council

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Who Cares About the Kids?

I am proud to say that I am a product of Milwaukee Public Schools. My wife and I made a decision to send our children to MPS, and they attend two of the most well regarded schools in the entire state. For me, the debate about the future of MPS and its structure of governance is far from theoretical. It deeply affects my own family and the constituents whom I represent as alderman of the 15th District.

I know for a fact that there are high-performing administrators and teachers, as well as a handful of high-quality institutions, within MPS. However, the system as a whole, per federal government standards, is a failing school district. President Obama and his Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, have made it crystal clear that the status quo will not suffice in Milwaukee or at any other school district in America.

It is well known that President Obama and Secretary Duncan believe in mayoral forms of governance. This is not because the president and the secretary want mayors to amass more power—it is because they have firsthand knowledge of a successful form of mayoral governance. And they know that mayors are accountable to voters. The goal is to elevate the platform for educational issues, giving them greater visibility and increased importance in our community.

But whether or not we agree with President Obama and Secretary Duncan that a mayoral form of governance will improve MPS, we must all agree on one thing: This debate is absolutely about our children and the urgent need to save a failing school district. It is about tens of thousands of students who are not being adequately educated according to national academic standards. We cannot continue to fail these students and their families, year after year. It only makes sense to examine every area of MPS—from A-Z—and that includes the governance structure at the top.

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Who Cares About The Kids/ADD ONE

We must put our differences aside and at least engage in a sincere debate about changing the governance structure at MPS. We must look beyond our own issues and work for the greater good of our kids, their families and the city as a whole. There will always be alarmists who dig in their heels and refuse to even consider structural changes, but we cannot allow them to dictate the discussion.

So ask yourselves this question: Who in their right mind would take on the task of improving a failing system that is so unwieldy, undisciplined and unsustainable? The answer: People who actually care about our kids.

Perhaps at the end of the day, a strict form of mayoral governance will not get us where we need to be. However, it should not prevent us from having a healthy, intelligent discussion that results in sound, substantive improvement.

It is painfully apparent that we cannot continue to support the status quo. The future of our city depends on transforming our school system into a vibrant, high-performing district. Minor changes around the peripheral will not help us improve the academic success of our children. Nor will they enable us to meet the federal standards put in place by the Obama Administration.

We must do whatever it takes to improve MPS, including bringing into the fold additional partners who can aide in that improvement. We must move strategically with a shared focus, and we cannot afford to recoil against innovation, creativity and collaboration.

We can and must expect excellence from the entire MPS school district, not for the sake of any individual leader or government body, but for the sake of our children.

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**Common Council President Willie L. Hines, Jr.
PRESS AVAILABILITY ON MPS**

TODAY

3:00 p.m.

**Outside Common Council/City Clerk's Office
City Hall, Second Floor (Room 205)**

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