



## **STATEMENT REGARDING MISSOURI STATE REPRESENTATIVE DOTTIE BAILEY'S ASSIGNMENT AS VICE CHAIR FOR ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

December 15, 2019

My name is John Kiehne and I'm a 5th generation Missouri native that was born and raised in St. Charles and now resides in Labadie, Missouri. As a child and young adult I attended public schools and received a high quality, tuition-free education in a modest middle-income community like many millions of others before and since. I appreciate the fact that every child born in my community, State and Country must have access to a tuition-free, high-quality education regardless of wealth, zip code, gender, ability, race, faith, ethnicity or sexual orientation.

My parents- like my grandfather, aunts, uncles and many cousins- were career public educators in Missouri. As a matter of fact members of my family have worked as teachers and administrators in the State of Missouri for over 100 years in everything from one-room rural schools to acting as administrators for entire school districts. Though I didn't become a public school teacher I've taught countless private music lessons over the years so I possess an appreciation for the work and dedication involved in order to be an effective educator.

As a child my parents' work in public education gave me a first-hand look at the lives of teachers, staff and administrators, their colleagues, schools and the children that they taught. My parents and their fellow educators were dedicated to teaching children not only academics but working to build character, teach critical thinking skills and give the children that they taught the tools necessary in order to become prosperous, healthy and peaceful adults. We were taught to be kind, honest and generous and to always work hard to better ourselves in order to become the best version of ourselves that we could become.

Public schools were and still remain a key component to building and maintaining prosperous communities like the ones in our own Missouri House District 110. In fact, parents purposely choose to move to communities with strong public schools as this is a prime indicator as to what the quality of life might be for a family, not to mention a practical consideration for maintaining and increasing a homeowner's property value.

I believe that we have a civil, moral and ethical responsibility to make sure that each and every child in the United States of America has access to a tuition-free, high-quality public education that serves to instill knowledge, insight and wisdom into our children who will ultimately become the adults of tomorrow. Our children must not be taken for granted, marginalized, used as political footballs or as a means for others to profit as we as adults, parents and caregivers are charged to protect and nurture them so that they may have a bright future filled with opportunity, prosperity and peace.

Our incumbent Missouri State Representative- Representative Dottie Bailey- has in her first term as a State Legislator been nominated to sit on the Elementary and Secondary Education Committee and in her second year has now been nominated to be Vice Chair for this very important body which fields legislation involving Missouri's public schools and chooses whether to forward that legislation to be heard in further debate. Rep. Bailey has- to my knowledge- no previous education, training, certification or direct relationship regarding teaching, administering, maintaining or improving schools in Missouri or elsewhere. As a matter of fact Rep. Bailey is a strong proponent of diverting taxpayers' public school funding to "Charter Schools"- alternative elementary and secondary educational institutions that often operate as privatized "for-profit" entities that are accountable to stockholders instead of students and lack the same oversight, academic standards, accountability and teacher qualifications as public schools.

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Rep. Bailey has received many thousands of dollars in political contributions from wealthy supporters of Charter Schools. As a matter of fact- over half of her financial support for her campaign in 2018 was donated by a few well-known Charter School supporters like the Devos family, Reed Hastings and Rex Sinquefeld among others. While she has actively advocated for Charter Schools and “school choice” she has also publicly voiced negative sentiments about “secular education”, public school administrators and even the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education itself- the entity that she as a Legislative Committee member should be collaborating with in good faith to best serve public school students in the State of Missouri.

As caregivers for 3 children, my wife and I moved to West St. Louis County not only for more natural space in which to breathe but for the excellent public schools. The communities where our children attended public school- including the Parkway and Rockwood School Districts- had the luxury of having some of the best schools in the State of Missouri. I appreciate and support the role that our public schools play in a community’s success and identity because our family has lived it firsthand from elementary school to high school graduation and beyond. In addition, having access to the services provided by the Special School District was integral to our kids’ ability to ultimately earn high school diplomas and acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in the adult world.

As a voter I believe that our elected officials have a duty and responsibility to their constituents to conduct themselves with honesty, integrity and civility in order to best represent the communities that they serve. There’s no room for divisive rhetoric, derogatory labelling and so forth as this behavior is unbecoming an elected official and isolates and diminishes segments of the community that they are sworn to serve.

Rep. Dottie Bailey has a habit of espousing divisive, extreme and derogatory views in a variety of venues that contradict the values that most parents, teachers and administrators would deem appropriate professionally or in regard to the messaging that we should voice to our students and parents. Not the least of which is her apparent disdain and lack of respect for the institutions that make up our public school system and her advocacy to divert funding away from our already underfunded public schools to for-profit alternatives that lack oversight or a solid track record of proven academic success.

I believe that Rep. Dottie Bailey is unfit to serve on our General Assembly’s Elementary and Secondary Education Committee as she clearly opposes the institution, insults and demeans the departments and individuals that she’s charged to collaborate with and is actively seeking to divert State Educational funding to for-profit alternatives supported by her wealthy political donors. In addition- I believe that nominating Rep. Bailey to serve in a leadership position on this Committee that’s so critical to the success of our State’s public schools is risky and might ultimately cause harm to many of our State’s children’s ability to access a tuition-free, quality public education.



- John Kiehne, resident, voter and candidate for State Representative in Missouri’s 110th House District