



MALDEF

Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund

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February 18, 2010

MALDEF Statement Regarding SB 3063 Seeking to Make Chicago Public Schools Local School Councils Advisory

The Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF) strongly opposes Senate Bill 3063 (SB 3063) introduced by Illinois State Senator James T. Meeks on February 8, 2010. SB 3063 seeks to eliminate the decision making authority of Local School Councils (LSCs), making their role purely advisory.

Created in 1988, LSCs decentralize the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) by involving local communities in decisions that have a direct impact on the education of their children. Comprised of parents, teachers, community members and student representatives, LSCs make important budgetary, educational, and administrative decisions for their schools. In addition, LSCs are instrumental in the selection of school principals, an LSC function that then Illinois State Senator Barack Obama supported.

When discussing SB 3063, Senator Meeks stated that he wants to “bring the issue of education to the discussion table and to hold CPS more responsible for school leadership”¹ and that he believes “most LSC members are not sophisticated enough to pick principals and approve budgets.”² Nevertheless, Senator Meeks admits that “in functioning communities, you have a functioning LSC and in disfunctioning communities, you have dysfunctional LSCs.”³

Although MALDEF agrees that there should be more accountability on the part of CPS, eliminating the decision making authority of all LSCs is both ill-conceived and ill-advised. As recognized by the United States Department of Education, parental involvement in a child’s education is highly correlated with higher test scores, better attendance, and higher graduation rates, among other things.⁴ Based upon this research, Senator Meeks should be seeking to find additional ways for LSC members to participate in their children’s education, not the opposite. MALDEF believes that parents, teachers and community members are educated and sophisticated enough to make the sorts of decisions LSCs are empowered to make. Although some LSCs do not function perfectly, scrapping the entire system is simply wrong. MALDEF urges Senator Meeks to withdraw SB 3603 and instead find ways to assist LSCs to function more effectively by providing them training and additional support.

¹ Meeks’ Bill Looks to Abolish LSCs, Expand Vouchers, *available at* <http://www.chicagodefender.com/article-7151-meeksrs-bill-looks-t.html> (last visited Feb. 17, 2010).

² Meeks’ Bill Looks to Abolish LSCs, Expand Vouchers, *available at* <http://www.chicagodefender.com/article-7151-meeksrs-bill-looks-t.html> (last visited Feb. 17, 2010).

³ WTTW TV Chicago Tonight: February 15, 2010, *available at* <http://video.wttw.com/video/1414503331/> (last accessed Feb. 17, 2010).

⁴ Family Involvement in Children’s Education: Successful Local Approaches, *available at* <http://www2.ed.gov/pubs/FamInvolve/execsumm.html> (last visited Feb. 17, 2010).