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# OUR CHILDREN/OUR SCHOOLS CAMPAIGN

March 6, 2007

Lucille E. Davy  
Commissioner  
New Jersey Department of Education  
100 River View Plaza  
P.O. Box 500  
Trenton, New Jersey 08625

Dear Commissioner Davy,

On February 25, the Star Ledger reported that you are planning to dissolve the Abbott Division as part of a “reorganization” of the New Jersey Department of Education (DOE). On February 26, you reported additional plans for the reorganization of the DOE to the New Jersey Senate Education Committee. This letter is an expression of concern about those plans.

We write on behalf of hundreds of thousands of school children, their families, and their communities who have a stake in effective education and accountability throughout the state. We specifically write on behalf of our colleagues and constituencies who have been engaged statewide in partnering with the DOE and working with districts to support implementation of the New Jersey Supreme Court’s equity mandates embodied in *Abbott v. Burke*.

Your plans to make major organizational changes to the DOE raise two critical questions that we urge you to address publicly before moving ahead with such plans. These questions include:

- **Why is the DOE reorganizing before the independent review recently ordered by the NJ state legislature has been initiated and completed?** Joint Resolution #3, passed overwhelmingly by the legislature and signed by the Governor on January 29, calls for an independent study that would “develop recommendations for the reorganization of the DOE that will improve the capacity of the department to oversee the operation of school districts and to respond immediately and effectively to operational and educational issues that may arise.” We believe it would be much more appropriate to complete that review prior to implementing another reorganization of the DOE.
- **What stakeholders have been consulted about plans to dissolve the Abbott division?** As noted above, many constituencies and advocates statewide have a stake in successful implementation of the Abbott decisions. Public discussion and review of such a major step as “dissolving” the division charged with implementing Abbott is needed to address concerns about how a “reorganized” DOE would improve implementation of the Abbott mandates and regulations. These mandates and regulations remain in effect however the DOE is organized. Failure to address these issues will only feed concern that dissolving the Abbott division represents a retreat from the commitments to equity and reform that the Abbott framework and remedies represent.

We urge you not to move forward with any premature, internal reorganization before addressing the urgent concerns we have raised in this letter. We stand ready to meet with you and other Administration and state officials to identify ways to address these concerns. Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Abbott Leadership Institute  
Asbury Park Civic Participation Project  
Association of Community Organizations for Reform  
Now (ACORN)  
Association for Children of New Jersey  
BlueWaveNJ  
Concerned Citizens Coalition  
Education Law Center  
Herbert Green, Plainfield resident  
Hispanic Directors Association of New Jersey

New Jersey Black Issues Convention  
New Jersey NAACP  
NAACP, Irvington Branch  
NAACP, Maplewood and the Oranges  
NAACP, Paterson Branch  
Paterson Education Fund  
Secondary Parents Council of Newark  
Statewide Education Organizing Committee  
Trenton CHANGE Coalition

CC.

Honorable Jon Corzine, Governor  
Heather Howard, Office of the Governor  
Janellen Duffy, Office of the Governor  
Jeanine LaRue, Office of the Governor  
New Jersey State Board of Education  
New Jersey Senate Education Committee  
New Jersey Assembly Education Committee  
New Jersey Joint Committee on the Public Schools  
New Jersey Special Legislative Committee on Public School Funding Reform