

BERRIEN COUNTY DEMOCRATIC PARTY

Resolution of the Berrien County Democratic Party (BCDP) in Support of Benton Harbor and the Benton Harbor Area School (BHAS) System

- Whereas the BCDP is committed to equal opportunity for all,
- Whereas a strong public education system is necessary for a strong and successful society, economy and community,
- Whereas the BCDP is in support of the Benton Harbor community, it's families and especially its children's rights to the same high quality public education afforded to all Berrien County and Michigan state residents,
- Whereas the BCDP is in favor of local control by elected school boards and support their involvement in all and any decisions regarding their schools,
- Whereas the future of Benton Harbor is essential to the future of all of Berrien County,
- Whereas the Benton Harbor community, as a whole, strongly opposes the closure of its public schools, and views its public schools as vital parts of their community,
- Whereas the Benton Harbor community is concerned about additional hardships that may occur when children are displaced from their neighborhood public schools, including financial hardship to the families affected,
- Whereas schools serve as communication hubs and polling locations in communities, therefore the closing of schools in marginalized communities, which are commonly communities of color, can have an outsized negative impact on disenfranchising (suppressing) the voters in those communities,
- Whereas the republican legislature has undermined progress for years through misappropriation of funding and grossly inadequate financial support of public education,
- Whereas the republican legislature has established policy that further hurts communities already struggling economically with a low property tax base that cannot make up the difference through foundations and other methods that wealthier communities may employ,
- Whereas the republican legislature has deregulated the privatization of schools, which are not held to the same educational standards as public schools and further deprives the public system of resources,
- Whereas a quality education leads to success in adult life and the children of Benton Harbor deserve the support of a public educational foundation needed to assure academic success in post-secondary education and economically viable careers beyond their education,

We, the Berrien County Democratic Party, by vote of its County Committee on June 1st, 2019, therefore resolve that the current State of Michigan administration including the Governor's office, the Michigan Education Department and the Michigan Department of Treasury should postpone a decision on the closure of any Benton Harbor Area School to better assess the options for the educational success of it's children by initiating discussions of these matters with the elected school board, the teachers, the parents and the students themselves. As described in part in the Peace for Life Youth Ambassador student organization resolution, the goal of these discussions should be to determine how the Benton Harbor Area School system could be assisted in addressing its educational and financial deficits to create a system that provides the children of Benton Harbor the world-class public education they deserve. To meet this objective, we urge that all relevant factors be considered, including economic, transportation, nutritional, healthcare and all other factors pertaining to student needs for success.

We therefore resolve to communicate this resolution to our legislators, who are elected to represent all residents of Berrien County Michigan.

Respectfully Submitted by,

The Berrien County Democratic Party as represented by:

Amy Scrima, Chair	Eric Lester, Chair Emeritus	Angela Bell, Vice Chair	Amanda Hirsh, Vice Chair
Aaron Bell, Vice Chair	Laura Goos, Vice Chair	Ken Neumann, Vice Chair	Joey Andrews, Vice Chair
Gretta VanBree, Secretary	Ian Haight, Vice Chair	Kim Jorgensen Gane, Vice Chair	Tim Walls, Vice Chair
Mark White, Treasurer	Ethel Clark-Griffin, Vice Chair	Jonathan Fisk, Vice Chair	Ben Frey, Vice Chair