



August 17, 2020

## BPSADC, INC OPPOSES MMSD's BOND REFERENDUM

Blacks for Political and Social Action of Dane County (BPSADC) uses this means to express opposition to the Madison Metropolitan School District's (MMSD) bond referendum being proposed for the November 3, 2020 election. BPSADC believes in providing high quality facilities for our children and youth, and we believe in fiscal responsibility for taxpayers. Our specific concerns follow:

- MMSD taxpayers have not received a fair return on investment. The most recent state standardized achievement scores demonstrate that 90% of African American students in the district cannot read or do math proficiently. We have not been presented with evidence that links additional public expenditures with increasing the academic performance of African American students. More of the same for African American students is unacceptable.
- With several months for the district to plan, the public has not been presented with a budget and budget narrative that explain the needs of each building to be renovated. This level of accountability is required.
- COVID-19 has emerged as the highest priority for all institutions in the nation. Much has changed since the Board of Education first floated the idea of a referendum. We believe it to be less than wise to forge ahead as if nothing has changed, with an expensive referendum at this time when public education generally is in a state of flux. In-person learning, online learning, or a combination of both are issues that have not been satisfactorily resolved and will not be resolved in the foreseeable future. No one can predict what might be required in terms of staffing, scheduling, personal protective equipment, curricula, technology, parental involvement, social and emotional learning, et al. We are especially concerned about the needs of low-income students and their families who may need a meal and housing more than they will need a new school or an improved chemistry lab.
- Relatedly, while Madison is perceived to be a sheltered middle-class community, there is a growing percentage of seniors struggling to keep a roof over their heads. All taxpayers deserve both well-educated youth and fiscal responsibility.
- BPSADC strongly supports public education generally and MMSD specifically. We are also encouraged by the hire of Dr. Carlton Jenkins. However, our support requires us to insist that the allocation of an addition one third of a billion dollar be well-planned, fiscally responsible and sensitive to the needs students and of taxpayers on fixed incomes.
- Very recently, the district hired a new superintendent whose credentials demonstrate a deep understanding of the challenges facing public urban education. Dr. Jenkins should be afforded time to gain experience with the district – to determine the needs of students, educators, staff, parents and community – and to share his expertise, research and networks before supporting the addition of significant funds beyond the district's annual operating and capital budget. The current referendum is not a product of Dr. Jenkins' leadership and his vision for the district.
- Indicia of our concerns is uncertainty about the nature of the elementary school to be constructed. Will it be a community school, our strong preference, or the new Nuestro Mundo? Such issues should be resolved before going to referendum.

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Sincerely,

Rev. David Hart, Esq.  
President

Kirbie Mack  
Vice President