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## Important Notice to Michigan Media

FROM: Jeanne Allen  
RE: Rochester PTA Uses Children to Advance Political Agenda

**We thought you'd like to know about a troubling incident that may be reoccurring all over the state!**

The mother of a student at North Hill Elementary School in Rochester, Michigan was outraged by a leaflet her child brought home from school last week.

She received the attached communication, which is both sloppy in style and substance.

With no apparent logo or letterhead, the leaflet begins by quoting author Jonathan Kozol, whose own research into schools has been questioned, saying, "People who support vouchers tend not to know very much about vouchers."

The leaflet attempts to connect choice-supporter Milton Friedman – a world-renowned Nobel Prize winner – to Chilean "Fascist" Dictator Augusto Pinochet. Friedman, now in his 80s, has virtually nothing to do with existing programs other than his written and acknowledged support.

In this political bulletin, an obvious response to the current initiative drive to put vouchers on the ballot for a vote in 2000, the PTA spews more lies when it says that vouchers started as a means to segregate black from white children.

Race baiting, name-calling and falsifying documents are hardly the stuff PTAs should be about.

Nowhere does the leaflet explain or mention that existing school choice programs nationwide serve predominantly minority children and that their schools are more integrated than the public schools from which many of them came.

The programs in Cleveland, Milwaukee and Florida were started with the help of African-American leaders.

Please call us for more information on this issue.

**"People who support vouchers, tend not to know very much about vouchers."**

—Jonathan Kozol

## **What is a voucher?**

A voucher is a way to redirect tax dollars from public education to private or parochial education. Vouchers are certificates given to individuals that, when redeemed, transfer public tax dollars from local, state and federal governments to schools. Most will only cover a portion of tuition costs and fees at private or parochial schools or transportation costs for a public school; the remaining costs must be covered by parents. Michigan's constitution prohibits the use of public funds for private or parochial education. To change the constitution a 2/3's vote in the House and Senate would be needed, or a public referendum could place such an issue on the election ballot.

## **Where did the idea for vouchers come from?**

Vouchers were first proposed during the 1950's by economist Milton Friedman. Since that time, PTA has had ample opportunity to consider and debate this issue. Our position in opposition to vouchers is based solidly on our belief that a system of free public schools under strong state and local controls is vital to our democratic society. Milton Friedman, is best known to the world as the former economics advisor to Augusto Pinochet, the fascist dictator of Chile.

The first time most people heard of choice was after the Brown decision in the 1950's when schools in many Southern states set up schools of choice—that was the word. They called them Freedom of Choice Schools as a ploy to avoid desegregation.

## **If we have a ban on private school vouchers in Michigan, why worry?**

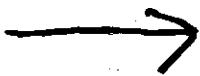
A petition drive called Kids Choice Yes! is being organized to collect signatures to place a ballot issue on the 2000 ballot that would repeal anti-voucher language from our state constitution. A similar petition drive called School Choice Yes! was formed to focus on tuition tax credits. Organizers supporting the Universal Tuition Tax Credits (UTTC) have now joined forces with the voucher petition drive.

At this time it appears that there will be a single petition drive. If the ballot issue is successful, tuition tax credits may be done legislatively.

## **Where did Choice come from?**

The first time most people heard of choice was after the Brown decision in the 1950's when schools in many Southern states set up schools of choice—that was the word. They called them Freedom of Choice Schools as a ploy to avoid desegregation.

"To separate (black children) from others of similar age and qualifications solely because of their race generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone. . . . We conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of "separate but equal" has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal." —*Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, 347 U.S. 483 [1954]



An outraged parent sent The Center for Education Reform this leaflet. She and CER object to the harsh tone and the use of children as messengers of misinformation.  
9/9/99