ATTORNEYS & ADVOCATES REACT TO HISTORIC LITERACY AGREEMENT

DETROIT, MICHIGAN – May 14, 2020 – A historic agreement was reached between the plaintiffs and Gov. Whitmer of Michigan in Gary B. v. Whitmer. The settlement includes a commitment of resources and infrastructure to improve literacy education for public school students in Detroit. Advocates and attorneys weighed in on this unprecedented agreement. Read the joint press release here.

“This profoundly important settlement, which follows from the Sixth Circuit’s landmark holding that all schoolchildren have a fundamental right of access to literacy under the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, is an important step in the right direction to provide Detroit children with the opportunity to learn on a par with all other children in Michigan," said Carter Phillips, Executive Committee Chair Emeritus of Sidley Austin. "Sidley Austin was proud to partner with Public Counsel and our other colleagues in creating new hope for Detroit children and their parents for the future.”

“I am beyond grateful that our children persevered to reach this monumental step towards securing a chance at a decent education for Detroit students,” said Dr. Pamela Pugh, Vice President of the Michigan State Board of Education. “As a co-defendant, I celebrate with them. I regret that it took going to such lengths to achieve this victory but the important thing now is the many lives hoped to be transformed by it.”

"The Sixth Circuit’s decision is groundbreaking, being the first to recognize a right of access to literacy," said Evan Caminker, Co-counsel for the case, Professor of Law and former Dean at University of Michigan Law School. "Hopefully this decision and settlement will help shine a light on the horrible conditions to which schoolchildren are subject to on a daily basis."

"For over 45 years I have been fighting for our children to receive a quality education so that they would finally become first class citizens," said Helen Moore, a longtime education activist. "The work of Keep The Vote, No Takeover and Detroit National Action Network has not been in vain. We are thankful for all the support that we received and now we can finally say that our children have a constitutional right to read."

“Today’s settlement takes a first and crucial step toward transforming the constitutional principles that the court recognized in Gary B. v. Whitmer into real and measurable improvements in the quality of education available to the children of Detroit," said Mark Haddad, Lecturer in Law, University of Southern California Gould School of Law. "A nation cannot achieve the goal of government of, by, and for the people, if it denies its people an opportunity to achieve literacy. Everyone who cares about children, and who believes that democracy has a future in this country, should cheer this milestone in self-governance.”

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