Dear Members of the Board:

U.S. Army general and former Secretary of State Colin Powell once wrote that the day your charges stop bringing you problems “is the day you have stopped leading them. They have either lost confidence that you can help or concluded you do not care. Either case is a failure of leadership.”

More than a quarter of the City of Saginaw’s school-age children have lost their confidence in you. Because more than 4,000 of Saginaw’s 12,000 school-age children have chosen to leave this district.

An even more sobering indictment of the Board’s leadership is the steady stream of teachers who continue to leave SPSD for jobs in other systems. Many of your best educators have also lost their confidence in you.

We, the undersigned parents of students of the Saginaw Public School District, write this letter to say that we, too, have lost confidence that you can help.

This Board’s failure to lead is best seen in the way it has refused to make difficult, painful decisions that, despite their difficulty, are necessary to the continued financial health and academic performance of the District. Its members have not sought to forge consensus, to compromise, or to set aside differences of opinion to act in the best interest of the students. This dysfunction is best seen in the recent recommendation for school closure. A motion was made, and rather than second the motion; offer, in discussion, your reasons for voting one way or the other; and voting the motion up or down, this board simply abdicated its decision-making responsibility.

In doing so, this Board looked completely spineless. It was the latest in a number of moves that, in total, are an embarrassment to our city, and a slap in the face of our children. Because of the dysfunction of this Board, SPSD will most assuredly lose hundreds of other students and scores of teachers before next September.

The Board has dragged its feet on deficit elimination. It has dragged its feet on getting Saginaw High School off the Michigan Priority Schools list ... and as it has dragged
its feet, Arthur Hill has now made the list. With no record to suggest that this board will do anything other than drag its feet, we, as parents, must take action.

Difficult and unpleasant as it would be, we now believe that a takeover by the state would be less harmful to Saginaw Public Schools than the leadership it now has. We are calling on Saginaw’s state legislative delegation to initiate action at the state government level. And we are working diligently to recall members of the Board.

However, in the meantime, we would ask that you, as Board members, might spare us further financial trauma, student and staff defection and embarrassment. You were elected to be leaders. We beg you: Lead. Or get out of the way and allow people who can and will lead to take your place.

Sincerely,
Jimmy E Greene
Ellen Crane Friegang
Greg Branch
Demond Tibbs
Sue Rutherford
Amanda Kitterman-Miller
On behalf of 82 other parents of Saginaw Public Schools students.

Cc:Dennis Muchmore, Chief of Staff
The Honorable Governor of the State of Michigan, Rick Snyder

State Senator Ken Horn

State Representative Vanessa Guerra

State Representative Tim Kelly