



NO STATE TAKEOVER OF MSCS!



VOTE NO on HB 0662 (SB 0714)

STATE TAKEOVERS: FAQ

A broad coalition of community advocates, education experts, faith leaders, and business leaders have united to stop the state takeover of Memphis Shelby County Schools (MSCS) through the Save Our Students 901 (S.O.S.) Coalition.

With growing concern about the impact of state control on the district's students, educators, and families, the S.O.S. Coalition is resisting state overreach with a guiding mission to strengthen MSCS schools and support students through increased community oversight in local governance.

Q: EXPLAIN HB0662/SB0714. WHAT ARE THE STATEWIDE IMPLICATIONS IF THIS BILL PASSES?

Under the misleadingly named "Tennessee Public School Accountability Act," any district that meets any one of four criteria--like having 30% of schools earning D/F grades or 25% of students chronically absent--could see its locally elected board replaced by a state-appointed board of managers chosen by the Governor, Lt. Governor, and Speaker of the House (who likely will not represent the districts at risk of takeover). These advisory boards have the final say, meaning they could override local decisions, convert schools to charters without local consent, and effectively remove local control from communities in ANY and ALL districts across TN that meet the criteria. There is no appeal on any decision the advisory boards make, which would effectively strip local electorates of their power. Over 40 districts meet the criteria currently, and that number could shift each year, putting many Local Education Agencies (LEAs) in a state of uncertainty with the risk of losing their elected leadership and community-driven oversight at any point.

Q: THE CURRENT TAKEOVER ATTEMPT IS MODELED AFTER TEXAS' TAKEOVER OF HOUSTON. HOW IS THAT GOING?

The 2023 Houston takeover has already generated major community backlash: most recently, students staged a mass walkout in protest of the top-down, test-heavy approach. State-appointed leadership in Houston has fired veteran educators and loosened teacher requirements, without demonstrating clear academic benefits. This follows additional failures of state takeovers in districts such as Detroit Public Schools and Little Rock School District. Houston is just the most recent example of how state-led takeovers of school districts rarely solve the underlying challenges of struggling districts. Worse, all too often they cause further disruption instead of delivering the promised improvements.

The S.O.S. (Save Our Students) Coalition is devoted to resisting state intervention and ensuring quality education in MSCS. The mission of the Coalition is to strengthen MSCS schools and support its students through increased community oversight in local governance.



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Q: WHAT ARE THE NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES OF STATE-LED TAKEOVERS?

Research shows that state-led takeovers tend to have adverse effects, particularly in majority-Black and Latino communities, which are statistically more likely to face takeover even when their academic performance is comparable to other districts. Teachers and staff face higher turnover, parents and community members lose a voice in decision-making, and learning is frequently disrupted - sometimes for years. In many cases, these takeovers don't produce improved student outcomes and can instead deepen existing racial inequities.

Q: WHY DID THE STATE-IMPOSED ACHIEVEMENT SCHOOL DISTRICT (ASD) FAIL?

The Achievement School District (ASD) in Memphis and Shelby County failed to meet its goal of moving schools from the bottom 5% to the top 25% in five years due to unrealistic expectations, high teacher turnover, leadership instability, and strong community backlash against removing local control. From an accountability standpoint, the leaders of the ASD never proactively closed a school due to failing to meet the stated goals. Despite nearly \$1 billion in state funding, ASD schools showed minimal academic gains, with fewer than 20% of students on grade level in 2018 and many high schools under 7% proficiency. These challenges and ineffectiveness ultimately led to broad bi-partisan support for the ASD's gradual phase-out.

Q: HOW CAN WE IMPROVE ACCOUNTABILITY AND STUDENT OUTCOMES WITHOUT A STATE TAKEOVER?

A more effective alternative has been independently proposed by multiple local stakeholders: forming a local advisory group to set clear expectations for MSCS performance at both state and local levels, while preserving democratic control. This coordinated approach offers partnership, support, and accountability without handing power to an unaccountable, state-appointed board.

Evidence shows that targeted investments—like extended learning time, teacher development, literacy coaching, high school success initiatives, and wraparound student support—deliver better outcomes than governance takeovers, especially when tied to transparent goals and monitoring. These methods keep resources in the classroom and hold the district responsible for measurable improvements. By adopting a collaborative, community-driven plan, we can achieve stronger accountability and honor local voices—exactly what our students need to thrive.