

Statement Regarding March 16, 2023 Ann Arbor Independent Article

The Ypsilanti Community Schools' Board of Education and administrative staff considers the March 16, 2023 article in *The Ann Arbor Independent* inaccurate and false. Board President Dr. Celeste Hawkins, who is primarily featured and quoted with respect to the reporting concerning the School District, was never interviewed. Therefore all quotes with Dr. Hawkins' name throughout the article are not affiliated with Dr. Hawkins in any way and are untrue. She also did not contribute to the article in any other respect. That fundamental inaccuracy is only one of many throughout this article.

Superintendent, Dr. Alena Zachery-Ross was interviewed, which the article did not acknowledge. The content presented in the article is misleading. Dr. Zachery-Ross denies making virtually all the statements attributed to Dr. Hawkins.

The purpose of sharing this statement is to assure our parents and community that student safety is our number one priority.

The school community should therefore be assured that:

- The School District does not have a relationship, contractual or otherwise, with an organization known as Supreme Felons Inc.
- The School District does not permit the Supreme Felons Inc. or any other community organization to discipline students.
- The Supreme Felons Inc. has not entered District buildings to “mentor” students.

- The School District does not allow any community organization or member unrestricted access to its facilities.
- The School District does not permit any individual to volunteer services without first undergoing a background check. See Board Policy 3120.09.
- The School District has comprehensive security policies and practices in place and does not have systemic security deficits. The Board of Education is reviewing those policies and procedures as part of a continual effort to improve them, not to develop and implement them for the first time.
- Student safety has been and always will be a primary concern of the District.
- The School District has not been threatened or intimidated by members of the Supreme Felons Inc. Similarly, that organization has not established a presence outside any of the District's schools. Students are not required to "run gauntlets" of felons to leave the School District's facilities.
- Parents and guardians of all our students are welcome and encouraged to participate appropriately in their children's education. That includes individuals with criminal histories.

Please contact school officials at your convenience if you have additional questions or concerns regarding this matter.