

Dr. Casandra Ulbrich  
Vice Chancellor for Institutional Advancement  
University of Michigan Dearborn  
Institutional Advancement  
1040 Administration Building  
Dearborn MI 48128-1491

---

March 26, 2021

Dear Dr. Ulbrich,

First, let me apologize for not leaving you my name. But given I still work for charter schools, I am concerned that my job would be in jeopardy should my employers find out who sent you this letter.

I have appreciated your view of charter schools when you bring up your concerns at State Board of Education meetings. I am certain you get plenty of mail regarding the issue of charters in Michigan. But I do believe I am in a unique position to point you in some right directions in your search for answers.

I am a longtime member of MAPSA (Michigan Association of Public School Academies). Every time you say something about charters, we are alerted by MAPSA of what has been said and several of us have been asked to come and offer public comment at your meetings.

I am also a longtime proponent of choice for children. Whether that choice comes from traditional schools, charter schools, parochial schools, vouchers, etc. But I am not in favor of for-profit management companies (aka Educational Service Providers – ESPs). Did you know that there are now over 55 such companies in Michigan alone? And this number continues to grow? Having worked for one such company for over twenty years now, I have significant concerns about what I see in the schools we manage – and even more troubling – what happens behind the scenes with for-profit companies.

My impetus for writing now is that we recently received something from MAPSA asking us to vote for an administrator of the year. One of the names that has been touted is that of Dr. Cherise Monet Cupidore, Ph.D. and School Superintendent to Crescent Academy campuses located in Southfield.

Dr. Cupidore has a long history of doing whatever it takes to make her school look like something it is not. Several complaints have arisen over the years as Dr. Cupidore repeatedly has put out students who have behavioral issues, special education needs that exceed what she believes is reasonable, fudged test scores, and much, much more. Crescent Academy has a toxic environment. Dr. Cupidore is easily one of the most discriminatory people I have ever known. Her threats to parents are legendary and if you check the records many, hundreds, have left her school over the years after being threatened with expulsion for their students from the slightest of incidents (particularly insubordination which could be as simple as cussing her out). Of course I do not support cussing out the school leaders, but if that was a cause for expulsion – most of our schools enrollments would be quickly depleted.

The reason MAPSA's nomination for her as the administrator of the year fails muster goes even deeper. Dr. Cupidore's daughter was enrolled at Crescent Academy for some time. A very troubled and special needs young lady who was both a major behavior problem and was several years behind in her academics. Both her grades and behavior deteriorated to the point that the Cupidore's were forced to send their teenage daughter to Chicago to

live with family members there. This young lady left Chicago just before it was time for her to graduate from high school. She re-enrolled at Crescent Academy in her senior year and lo and behold, to the surprise of everyone from the student who was robbed of this honor, to parents and staff, she graduated valedictorian of her class. When Dr. Cupidore was confronted by her administration, she fired them. They no longer have a high school.

How did her management company, CS Partners, let her get away with this – particularly after a truckload of complaints? Because Dawn Marshall, one of the Partners herself and an attorney, had a son who did not make the grades to become valedictorian at his school – Charyl Stockwell Preparatory Academy. The solution was easy. Change the numbers and the requirements so suddenly Dawn’s son was eligible to be co-valedictorian. With the help of founder (of both the school and the management company) Chuck Stockwell, Dawn was able to see her dream of her son becoming the third of her children to become valedictorian of his class. Even though he did not deserve it any more than Dr. Cupidore’s daughter did.

So, how can MAPSA even consider this second nomination for Dr. Cupidore (she won the title in 2011)? Is Dan Quisenberry turning his head away as CS Partners continues to fly just under the radar of those who could end both MAPSA and CS Partners? Dan is a super, super nice man. But if he doesn’t see the discrepancies or the complaints lodged against CS Partners and the schools in their portfolio, then he isn’t paying attention.

Let me give you just a few examples.

- Who paid for an extravagant 60<sup>th</sup> birthday party for Chuck Stockwell at Laurel Manor in Livonia complete with a famous jazz singer? CS Partners did.
- Who continues to pay for Stockwell’s new vehicles, even though him and his retired school administrator “wife are now retired and he continues to collect a salary as a “thought partner” and her as a “superintendent”? CS Partners does.
- Who continues to fund the extravagant lifestyles of the Stockwell’s and the Dockin’s (Chuck’s right-handed person in the company who took over as primary owner when he “kind of” retired), including numerous trips abroad (Italy being a favorite locale, Mexico in the winter, Traverse City in the summer . . .) with homes everywhere they go? CS Partners does.
- Who paid for one of the Partner’s homes so it could become a “Smart” home to entertain expensive political parties? It was important to have republicans in their coffers. The political process at its best – and the booze and food is amazing!
- How many businesses do Chuck and Maria actually own and collect salaries from? CS Partners, MEP Services, Day Cares, Partner’s Properties, Autism Centers, it’s a shell game. I am sure there are more, but they shuffle and change many of these regularly as they each continue to draw salaries from all of them. And who pays for all of this? CS Partners. They easily make over 7 digits a year between all of their scams.

Remember Steven J. Ingersoll from Smart Schools Management in Traverse City who was recently released from prison? Not jail – prison. Steve was in the news for a long, long time. Chuck and Steve began that management company with Maria Dockins. The two men had a big business divorce. Steve kept the northern schools, Chuck, with Maria at his side, the lower Michigan schools. Peas in a pod. How Steve got caught and nobody is investigating Chuck or Maria is anyone’s guess. I assume they are simply better at hiding the money and they are very, very good at that.

Especially once they hired Laura Carpenter, Maria’s comptroller sister who owned her own business at one point, but sold it when she was made a lucrative offer by Chuck. Laura has served as the comptroller for many years now. How convenient for Chuck and Maria. There was a HUGE boost to the amount of money the Partners were making

once Maria Dockins brought her on board. Maria only had her bachelor's degree, but Laura was much more savvy and educated.

- Who paid the expensive price tag to bring Mary K Shields from CMU Charter Schools Office in as a partner even paying for her apartment so she could be closer to the office? CS Partners.
- Who paid for the two weeks of work/vacation for all the Partners and their families and friends at the Homestead in Glen Arbor for years and years? Talk about an extravagant bill. CS Partners.
- Who pays for the extravagant presents that Maria gives her children? She has bragged about the things she has bought them for years. It's always the latest gadget, and expensive something. She pays more for one gift for one child than I have in my budget for my entire family on both sides! CS Partners.

When I say CS Partners is paying for all of these extravagances – I should instead say *the schools* in our portfolios are the ones really paying the price.

CS Partners is different than other management companies. You have obviously been interested in National Heritage. The biggest management company in Michigan. But have you heard of CS Partners – now the second largest? We get schools to come to us by promising them whatever they need to hear. We will provide you with business and/or HR services. We have experts in each of the educational fields that will help you continue with your own curriculum, with your own Board, with your own . . . whatever they desire.

When CS Partners strikes a “deal” with the schools for 10-12% of their per pupil state aid, they fail to tell schools that Charyl Stockwell Academy (CSA) and Preparatory Academy (CSPA) and the Crescent Academy schools are only paying 3%. Hmmm. You can bet the Boards don't get that information. What a deal for those two schools districts. And what a drain for those smaller, less income schools. While some of our schools don't have books, are using buckets in hallways and classrooms to catch the water coming in from the roof, have to borrow money for toilet paper and other basic needs, these 3% schools are showered with state-of-the-art facilities with EVERYTHING a student could possibly need/want. Their teachers make more. Their administrators make a LOT more. Their students get more.

I have been in CS Partners managed schools where the buildings are so run-down children have to wear coats during the school day just to keep warm because the heat doesn't work. Unbelievable conditions, but most of those schools house inner-city kiddos whose parents don't complain.

Oh, and why did Chuck, Maria, and Mary Kay constantly talk about the need to keep Crescent Academy happy and in their portfolio and charge such a low rate – ready for this? Because Cherise Cupidore is BLACK. They knew they would not have legitimacy with this sector of schools unless they had someone with a higher education and of color in the limelight. And this is not just my conjecture. It has been said aloud again and again. It's shameful in this day and age. Reverse discrimination at its finest.

When CS Partners decided to bring on Chris Matheson, things began to change. Chuck was leaving to live off the spoils of his retirement from Wayne Westland Schools, the retirement of his wife from Livonia schools, and both of their retirement packages from CS Partners that would pay them throughout the rest of their lives. A nice extravagant package to keep up all the homes, travel, and toys they enjoy.

From what we understand, Chris started at Sabis Schools (Management Company from the Middle East with schools in twenty countries on five continents). This company has fared very poorly in the US. They strive to keep

high scores by eliminating students who cannot meet the academic muster. They have actually instructed their special education administrators to encourage “these students” to not enroll in their US schools. When once asked what they do with special education kiddos in his country the owner replied – “They don’t go to school. They die”.

When Chris could not make enough of a windfall with Sabis he went to Choice School Associates. Another management company. When CS Partners made him an offer he could not refuse, he quickly left Choice to take a higher paycheck at our company. His best buddy Tim Tenneriello was brought on shortly thereafter and was put in a position he was not even close to being qualified for jumping way ahead of those who had been working their way through the ranks. Particularly partner Jim Perry with years and years of classroom, principal, and superintendent experience.

Tim came from Sabis as well and was ecstatic when Chris made it “into” CS Partners because they “spend money like water on their management personnel”. He couldn’t wait to begin working for Chris and Maria stating that Maria had a bank card that had no bottom. He was looking forward to the parties, the free-flowing booze, and the chance to move into an upper echelon position in a company that wouldn’t look at his failures at Sabis (and there were many). I know this because he publicly stated this on several occasions.

So, how do I know all of this to be true? Because I live it, I have lived it. Daily. For years. Watching, keeping my mouth shut because I am the main provider for my family.

As I indicated previously, I cannot offer my name. I don’t want to lose my job. I need the salary and the benefits. But I can give you the name of some people that might be willing to share their experiences with you. Some of these go back awhile and some have been negatively affected by more recent events. I only know where most of these people are any longer by having sought them out online, but I believe most are still in Michigan, involved in education in one form or another. Some of these people have been deeply hurt by the shenanigans of the people I work with. It needs to stop.

I no longer wish to be complicit in less than stellar practices that hurt people in so many ways whether they are current employees, or parents, or students, or Board members, or former employees any longer. I have watched this for years and often worry what I am asked to do my even be on the edge of illegal. But of course we are not let into the inner sanctum, so we only get pieces of puzzles and are chastised if we speak to anyone who might have another piece. It’s a moving target. All the time.

Below are names of people who have been fired by or quit working for CS Partners (CSP) for questionable reasons (to the best of my understanding and hopefully from most recent although timeline is fuzzy):

- Amey Dryer – Curriculum and Instruction Coordinator for CSP. Left quietly when they decided to “go in another direction.” Now with Choice School Associates.
- Barbara Rooker – Curriculum Coach for Sabis then CSP took over her school in Lansing. They asked for her resignation as they decided to go in another direction. She is now with Grand Ledge Public Schools
- Steven Beyer – Superintendent of CSP, forced to resign when graffiti threat was discovered in a girl’s bathroom and CSP didn’t like the press. Returned to Utica Public Schools.
- Kimberly Love – Quit under extenuating circumstances at Crescent Academy. Serving as Director of Student Services at Hillel Day School.
- Phillip Yaccick – Principal for CSP. Asked to resign as they decided to go in another direction. Now CAO at Great Lakes Academy of Pontiac.
- Paula Sizemore – Principal at Warren Academy, same story as the others. Now teaching at Mumford HS in Detroit.

- Jim Reese – hired from the Livingston ESA and made principal at CSPA. Fired within a short time because “we decided to go in another direction”. Now owns his own counseling business in Brighton.
- Teri Pettit – Partner and special ed director for all the schools for over 20 years, fired 9 days after losing everything in a house fire, because we decided to go in another direction. Job was given to black woman – exactly as Mary Kaye Shields told us it would. Now with MDE Special Ed Office.
- Mike Vance – Partner who was asked to retire in lieu of resigning or being fired. We decided to go in another direction. Works part-time for school district in TN.
- Diane Vance – Partner who left when her husband was asked to retire. Works for Steven Covey in TN.
- Katie Pettit – Business department at CSP, told to resign after differences in opinion with Carpenter. Now a social worker in Livingston County.
- Dr. Ali Bazzi – Quit under extenuating circumstances at Crescent Academy. Now Assistant Superintendent at Hamadeh Educational Services.
- Nir Saar – Quit under extenuating circumstances at Crescent Academy. Served as Principal at DPS until August 2020, now COO of Doghouse – a multi-state cannabis company.
- Celesta Grear – Principal at Experiencia Academy. Sought after, given an apartment, then let go suddenly leaving her homeless in the middle of winter. She lost everything and hitched rides to Florida where she now teaches in Pinellas County Schools.
- Kaylene Kennedy – Business department at CSP, told to resign after differences in opinion with Dockins/Carpenter. Lives in Brighton.
- Curtis Warren – brought on as the Director of School Leadership for Urban Education abruptly fired and escorted from building. No explanation to staff. Now in Benton Harbor Schools.
- Sherri Bass – contract was not renewed. No explanations. She assumed it was due to her advanced age (mid 60’s). She was right.
- Amy Pogorzelski – Principal at American Montessori Academy for many years. Asked for her resignation stating “we decided to go in another direction.” Now working for NHA as curriculum director at Plymouth Scholars Academy in Plymouth, MI.
- Andie Jump – Hired to run a new charter school CSP opened in Oxford. School closed and she was let go with no offers to move her after a grueling year full of promises. Now selling real estate in Waterford.
- Jennifer Wilkins – Principal at American Montessori Academy. Let go and escorted from building. Fought hard against resigning and many Board meetings ensued. Now the instructional leader at Branch Line Charter School in Livonia.
- Kaye Mentley – went with Steve Ingersoll in the business divorce. Past Superintendent for Grand Traverse Academy. Retired and living in Arizona.

The truly awful things for most of these people – they had at-will contracts, were cut off from their medical and other benefits, and had minimal 401Ks so most will have to work much, much longer than their public school counterparts who are covered by fair contracts negotiated by the MEA or AFT.

Not only that, but CS Partners (or MEP Services under the direction of Carlie Lockwood, another Partner, is one of the many subsidiaries) asks these people to resign so they will not have to pay them unemployment benefits. And if someone does apply for benefits – they won’t be successful because we lie on their start dates which causes a red flag and to date, people have not been willing to take this further by filing a complaint with the State Attorney’s Office. Something Carlie and her staff are counting on.

Most are so blindsided by being let go as they have had stellar records, they are left scrambling for new jobs and insurance. Something I believe the Partners bank on. And as you can see from the list above, too many of these people have a difficult time recovering and very talented people leave the field of education altogether. It's such a shame, especially in this time of significant shortages in our schools.

There are two bloggers that began reporting on Steven Ingersoll and have additionally reported on some of the workings of Chuck Stockwell and Maria Dockins as different things crop up – but a lot of the stories never make it to anyone who can help. These are admittedly left-wing bloggers, but their information is hauntingly accurate. You can find these blogs at:

- Up North Progressive: <https://www.upnorthprogressive.com/?s=Stockwell> and Glistening, Quivering Underbelly at: <https://glisteningquiveringunderbelly.blogspot.com/search?q=stockwell>.

The Detroit Free Press has additionally run several stories over the years as have well-intentioned Michigan TV reporters regarding the corporate greed of for-profit management companies. Unfortunately any real action seems to stop there. People know. People try to find the bones, but then leave the fight battle weary as these for-profit companies have learned how to play the shell game with an unrivaled expertise.

Dr. Ulbrich, I beg you to be more dogmatic than others who have preceded you. Find the truths buried beneath the surface. Please understand CS Partners is just one of many for-profit management companies in Michigan. Some may be better, others I know to be worse (as I have worked for others), and all are for-profit considering the need for themselves over the needs of the schools (293 charters in 380 buildings in 2020) and students (over 150,000 now being served). When the legislature proposes to cut the funding for charter schools, the students and teachers will pay the price as the for-profit companies will find a way to continue receiving their windfall.

I wish you good luck in your search for justice for these schools, and justice for the large number of innocent good people harmed in the wake of the greed of for-profit management companies and their owners and partners. Perhaps one or more of the good people copied on this letter will be willing to take up the charge with you. I hope you have the clout to finally do something to stop both the management companies and the 38 (and growing) authorizers who turn a blind eye to their injustices – if they are even aware of them (an entirely different line of stories for a different time).

**Thank you and the State Board of Education for your continued support of our Michigan children.**

cc: Dr. Michael Rice, Michigan Department of Education Superintendent  
The Honorable Lana Theis  
The Honorable Ann Bollin  
The Honorable Hank Vaupel  
The Honorable Debbie Stabenow  
The Honorable Gary Peters  
The Honorable Elissa Slotkin  
Peter Bhatia, Matthew Dolan, Lily Altavena, John Wisely – Detroit Free Press  
Jennifer Chambers, Karen Bouffard, Robert Snell – The Detroit News  
Heather Catallo & Ross Jones, WXYZ Channel 7  
Hank Winchester, WDIV-TV  
Charlie Langton & Rob Wolchek - Fox 2 Detroit  
Anita Senkowski, Blogger