

## Letter regarding the Competence of Commissioner of Ed Mike Morath

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Dear Texas Senate Nomination Committee and Senate Education Committee Members:

As a parent with a child in a Texas independent school district, I have great concerns regarding not only the **competency and qualifications** of appointed Commissioner of Education Mike Morath, but of the qualifications of AJ Crabill (West), who was hired by Mike Morath as Deputy of Governance. Mike Morath has been on the job as Sec. of Ed since Jan. 4, 2016. as seen [here](#).

These concerns are as follows: Please notice links and documentation are included within this e-mail.

1. After obtaining the application of Commissioner of Education Mike Morath, it seems the only application on file with Governor Abbott's office is the application for Mike Morath to be on the Next Generation of Assessments and Accountability Committee. It appears there is no application for Mr. Morath to serve as the Commissioner of Education. (See this [PDF](#).) Did he complete the proper application process to become the Commissioner of Education of Texas? Please investigate what vetting process was completed to determine the appointment of Mike Morath. Based on the application obtained, it is clear the information and dates on the online form he filled out do not match his **very short resume**. What experience as an educator of students in the education field does Mike Morath have that would warrant his appointment to be the Commissioner of Education of the State of Texas?

In April of 2016 Commissioner of Education Mike Morath [announced](#) the [restructuring of the Texas Education Agency](#). As reported in the [Dallas Morning News](#). Excerpts are as follows:

- ***The Dallas Morning News recently reported Morath had named AJ Crabill, a former chairman of the Kansas City (Mo.) School Board, to the position of deputy commissioner for governance. Crabill was known as Airick West during his time in Kansas City. He and the commissioner have***

*declined several requests for interviews and questions about how Morath met Crabill and the circumstances surrounding his hiring in the last several weeks.*

- *Crabill, Schwinn and Winchester will make an annual salary of \$180,000 each. Aghazadian will make \$160,000, the education agency confirmed. The three new hires announced Wednesday will start at the agency on May 9.*

2. After obtaining the application for AJ Crabill (West), (See this [PDF](#)), whom Mike Morath hired to be the Deputy of Governance, I am even more concerned about the actual **competence** of Mike Morath and of those now working within the restructured TEA.

AJ Crabill(West)'s experience in governance is virtually nonexistent. In fact, [here is an interesting scoring sheet from Atlanta public schools](#). AJ Crabill(West) did not make the cut on his own merits.

AJ Crabill's Texas Education Agency (TEA) application states the name "West." It is my understanding he was legally not able to use the name Crabill at the time of his employment and thereafter. (Note: from research I have obtained, there is no legal record or court verdict in Texas or Missouri of any court sanctioned "adult adoption" and/or evidence showing his legal name change.) This official state employment application, signed under penalty, is dated March 7, 2016. **Did anyone at TEA bother to verify his credentials and do any kind of background check?**

West's first day of official employment with TEA was March 28, 2016. His name was not officially changed at that time. A review of Mr. West's application reveals the following work experience timeline and information:

- **6/2005 - Present (11 years)** - Self Employed, "Governance & Cultural Competency Consultant".
- **1/2002 - 6/2004:** Owner, StrategicHERO (Missouri). Stated that the company failed.

- **10/1999 - 2/2001:** Owner, PixSoul (Kansas). "Provided e-commerce solutions to corporate clients. Led a team of graphic designers and web developers. Managed the transfer of Pixsoul assets to a Fortune 500 acquirer". (After checking with both the Kansas Secretary of State and also the Kansas Department of Revenue there are NO records of the existence of this company, nor any record of its sale, nor any payment of state taxes.)
- **There is no work history disclosed prior to 10/1999.**
- **There is no Education attainment listed at all - not even a High School diploma.**
- **There are also serious employment gaps given in the periods of 6/2004 -6/2005 (1 year) and 2/2001 - 1/2002 (11 months).**
- **TEA's Deputy Commissioner of Governance, AJ Crabill/Airick West was sanctioned several times by the state of Missouri as recently as 2015 for a serious Ethics Violation: <http://mec.mo.gov/Scanned/CasedocsPDF/22110.pdf>**

However, upon verifying the information given, it has been discovered that Mr. West's application may actually contain false information and material omissions.

A check of [state records in Kansas](#) and Missouri reveals that Mr. West has failed to disclose his association with numerous companies he has formed, is listed as an officer or director, and some that failed or were sanctioned.

The Missouri Secretary of State shows that Mr. West formed and is currently listed as an officer of a for-profit not disclosed on his TEA application (Colbairi Corporation) and a non-profit corporation, Camp 360KC.

According to another filing, Mr. West recently served as an officer for several political action committees **State Democratic Party treasurer**, Airick West PAC (for which he was sanctioned by the Missouri Ethics Commission for violations) and also KCU4EA PAC (which he founded and ran and which was also sanctioned by the Missouri Ethics Commission for numerous violations).

Regarding his alleged work experience, Missouri records show that Strategic Hero Inc. was incorporated by West in 7/3/2003 (roughly 1.5 years after the date given

on the application). The business address was 6301 Rockhill Rd, Suite 412, Kansas City, Missouri. This enterprise failed and was dissolved by the state of Missouri on 6/24/2004 for failure to file a Registration Report. Already you can see where his reported dates are not truthful. Moreover, this location was the subject of a lawsuit against Sherry Payne, his mother, for failure to pay rent. West's biological mother, Sherry Payne, signed the corporate lease on the space and was the official "Tenant". (See Kansas City, Missouri civil case #04CV227101 Rockhill Properties LLC versus Sherry L Payne) - Default Judgment against Sherry Payne dated 10/12/2004.

Mr. West has failed to disclose that he worked for a dot com company. He alleges the company that "recruited him" away from the University of Kansas, which is another falsification. (Need to verify whether it was Cephass Multimedia, a fast growing start-up that was founded in 1995 and built websites and was located in Overland Park Kansas. This company failed and folded around the 2000/01 time frame.) Mr. West failed to disclose the nature of his employment with this company, his salary, and responsibilities. It also appears that he never paid taxes in accordance with his employment.

Mr. West also fails to list that he graduated from High School in June 1997, as well as the dates he attended the University of Kansas, whether he earned any credits, as well as the date indicating when he "dropped out."

What is so troubling are the countless companies and other organization that Mr. West has been involved in, none of which is listed on his TEA application. (See Attached)

**Did anyone at TEA verify or conduct a background check or confirm/review of Mike Morath or AJ Crabill/West's résumés?**

**Please see this invoice (See [this PDF](#)) to Dallas ISD, which covers November and December 2015 when Mike Morath was still officially on the DISD board. Please note, it is my understanding that at no time did Airick Leonard West (Crabill) ever possess a valid procurement or public contract for services with DISD and was never vetted and/or selected to do this work by DISD, yet Airick Leonard West called DISD his client.**

By formally submitting an ["Invoice"](#) (recorded as DISD-2015-0001) covering

"Governance Training & Coaching" he fraudulently depicts himself as a "Senior Trainer" and "Board Member Coach" warranting invoicing (billing) the District \$24,100 based on under 4 days of alleged work. Notice West's personal billing rates for a public sector consulting are egregious and outrageous and do not represent any reasonable standard: \$5,000 per day, and \$650 per hour). What's troubling is, West/Crabill went ahead and without any authorization or agreement sent a bill for his own services then turned around and called it a donation requesting the district validate the full amount of the bill with a "tax receipt". The charges to the District are as follows: Board training (November & December - no specific dates shown - for 3 days @ a rate of \$5,000 per day, total \$15,000), board member coaching/interviews (12 hours, \$650/hr, total \$7,800) and management coaching (2 hours @ \$650/hr, \$1,300).

Mr. West has paying instructions that directs the district to do the following: "Opting to donate training and coaching hours for this billing period to DISD. For tax purposes, please provide a letter noting the value of this donation. If there are questions regarding your bill, please contact airick leonard west at 913.481.7779." The business address for this invoice was shown as Mr. West's residence, 3239 Wabash, KC MO 64109.

Mr. West was fully aware that Dallas ISD NEVER contracted for any services from him, whether gratis or otherwise. It is also my understanding that Mr. West was asked to not come back.

Travel & expense fees were not assessed on this bill. It is unclear if he was reimbursed for travel and by whom.

Mr. West states that his professional services should be treated as a "donation" to Dallas ISD and requests, "for tax purposes" a letter be sent to "airick leonard west" noting the total value of \$24,100 he attempts to bill for services he allegedly rendered.

Mr. West values his consulting services well above basic market rates, yet possesses almost no substantive governance experience, licenses, certifications or other professional credentials (much less a college degree) to justify such a ludicrous billing rate.

What's more troubling is that at the time of this 2015 invoice to Dallas ISD, Mr. West was still an [elected official with Kansas City Public Schools \(KCPS\)](#) while serving on the [Executive Committee of the Council of the Great City Schools \(CGCS\)](#), a 501C3 organization that receives millions of dollars in fees from large

urban school districts. The Executive Committee oversees and appraises the Executive Director (Casserly) and governs CGCS.

For Mr. West to be selling professional services while avoiding the scrutiny of procurement by public school districts as a resource for CGCS seems to be a huge conflict of interest and possibly illegal. Airick West changed his name to AJ Crabill in 2016 after he was officially hired by TEA in March 2016.

Mr. West (now Deputy Commissioner of TEA Crabill, hired by Commissioner Mike Morath) should be formally investigated by the state.

Please keep in mind, AJ Crabill (WEST) has the authority as Deputy of Governance, to decide whether our Independent School Districts and Charter schools, such as the Harmony Gulen schools, are investigated.

The TEA Deputy of Governance is a \$180,000 plus benefits state executive level position. I would like to know why many qualified Texans were passed over for this position, so that an out of state highly unqualified, likely, fraud could be hired. What an insult and disgrace to the students, parents and actual educators of Texas!

As a Texas Mom and taxpayer, I ask you to **VOTE NO** on the confirmation of Morath and demand a new Commissioner of Education be appointed and an investigation of both Mike Morath and AJ Crabill(West) be launched.

Kindest Regards,

Alice Linahan  
Argyle ISD Parent