

Miss Illinois SINCE 1927

OFFICIAL STATE FINAL TO MISS AMERICA

Miss Illinois Scholarship Organization

August 20, 2018

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Miss Illinois Scholarship Organization Board of Directors has been closely following the events and discussions related to the leadership of the Miss America Organization (MAO). We hoped that these issues were the growing pains that come with any transition in leadership, but the recent developments and information provided by Miss America Cara Mund, along with the inadequate and insufficient responses to Ms. Mund's legitimate concerns by MAO leadership, were disheartening. For that reason, we can no longer wait for positive change from a leadership group that has proven itself incapable of furthering the mission of Miss America.

The power and responsibility of the Miss America Organization and its state organizations is remarkable. The resources and opportunities made available to young women are vast and we should be collectively focusing on how we can continue to support the talented and intelligent women this organization was created to benefit. The focus on individuals in leadership detracts from that purpose, but it is those individuals currently in leadership who have shifted the focus from the powerful future of the young women competing at the local, state, and national level. That shift is not in the best interests of the organization.

In order for the Miss America Organization, along with its affiliated state and local organizations and multitude of volunteers, to continue to be the premier scholarship and service organization there must be a balance between the myriad of opportunities available at the state and local level and the gravitas of the national organization. Unfortunately, the actions of current leadership have served to hurt, rather than strengthen, the standing of the organization. In particular, the public treatment of Miss America Cara Mund is unacceptable.

For these reasons, among many other concerns, the Board of Directors of the Miss Illinois Scholarship Organization has determined that the current Chair of MAO, Gretchen Carlson, and the current CEO, Regina Hopper, have lost the ability to be effective, transparent, and transformative leaders. It is our view that, in the immediate future, these individuals must step down from their roles with the Miss America Organization and new leadership selected by the state organizations must take their place.

We understand that the timing of these changes is difficult, but it is now unavoidable. We want this year's Miss America competition to be successful, to celebrate the amazing young women who are competing, and to continue the legacy of scholarship and service everyone expects. We also want it to be a fair and impartial process which focuses on the strengths, smarts, and talents of the contestants. We look forward to working with the other organizations around the country to create a national organization that is truly focused on the mission of Miss America.