



March 16, 2023

Dear Members of the House Committee on Labor,

My name is Matt Schueller, and I am the Director of Government Relations for the Michigan Association of Superintendents and Administrators – we represent the more than 600 public school superintendents and central office administrators in the state of Michigan.

I wanted to briefly touch on House Bill 4044 and why we are opposing the bill as introduced, but also want to address other concerns and issues that were brought up in previous testimony on this bill, to ensure that there are no misconceptions on where our members stand on the educator shortage and other important issues facing Michigan's public schools.

First, on House Bill 4044, we do oppose the bill as introduced. Our chief concern when discussing contractual negotiations is making sure that both sides come to the table and there is an incentive to negotiate. Since this law was passed, contracts are being ratified overwhelmingly. We want that to continue. We are committed to ensuring that this is a fair process for both sides that benefits our public schools.

However, I do want to make clear that we are willing to work with the sponsor and this Committee on possible changes that would address issues raised in previous testimony. Specifically, we want to sit down to discuss possible changes to the law that would address the issue of using rising health care costs as a negotiating tool so that teachers are not punished and bearing increased health care costs when negotiating their contracts.

With that said, I wanted to talk a little bit about our members. Many of them were teachers and principals before becoming superintendents. They are educators. Their job is to provide the best learning environment for kids, period. Many of the items raised previously, our members are one hundred percent in agreement with. The educator shortage – and I want to note it is a district-wide educator shortage and not just teachers – is our top priority right now. We've supported initiatives in the budget to attract and retain teachers, and outlined them in our list of priorities for this legislative term. We are supporting efforts to increase educator wages, as well as efforts to strengthen the retirement system for educators. Putting it plainly, we know schools do not work without teachers.

Additionally, we are committed to working together with our partners in labor on repealing the third grade reading retention requirement, reworking educator and administrator evaluations, and repealing the A-F accountability system, which Rep. Koleszar recently introduced. At the end of the day, we all want the same thing – valued educators, great schools, and the best possible learning environment for our children.

Finally, on labor issues, I want to reiterate that we as an Association have committed and asked to sit down with our colleagues and see what common ground we can find. There were a lot of



policies and laws enacted in the last decade that need a comprehensive review, and we want to have a holistic, honest discussion on all of these issues and to work together to come up with solutions that make our educators feel valued. Looking at this law in context, it was passed when the Legislature cut school funding and, in many cases, the only way for schools to balance their budget was to ask for concessions. It was an environment constructed to pit school administrators and teachers against one other. I would draw a straight line between underfunding schools and many policies previously enacted in Lansing, including this law.

One final point – while we are optimistic that funding will continue to improve under this Legislature, our members also must look at the long term outlook. Between continued discussions on tax cuts and School Aid revenue continually being diverted from the classroom, as well as the possibility of a loss of revenues in the event of a recession, we must be very cautious and try to avoid what our members and all educators lived through more than a decade ago.

I want to reiterate to members of this Committee that even if there are a few specific areas of disagreement on labor issues, MASA members are committed educators who want to partner with teachers on ensuring that Michigan's public school system does a great job preparing students to be citizens and that values our educators for the professionals they are.

We look forward to partnering with the Legislature and our colleagues in labor to make this happen.

Michigan Association of Superintendents & Administrators

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