



TO: Honorable Members of the House Education Committee
 Honorable Members of the Senate Education and Career Readiness Committee

FROM: Calhoun Intermediate School District
 ESA Legislative Group
 Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators
 Michigan Association of School Boards
 Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals
 Michigan Association of Superintendents and Administrators
 Michigan Elementary and Middle School Principals Association
 Middle Cities Education Association
 School Equity Caucus
 West Michigan Talent Triangle

DATE: July 21, 2020

RE: **House Bills 5910-5913**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on House Bills 5910-5913 and the challenges facing Michigan schools as they prepare for students to return for the 2020-21 school year. We appreciate the Michigan Legislature's willingness to consider these issues and to look for solutions that will address the needs of our students, families, and schools.

While some of the ideas embodied in HBs 5910-5913 have merit, they pose a number of challenges given the short timeline schools face for planning for the next school year. Schools are already in the process of developing their plans for returning in the fall. There are two items that must be addressed legislatively now to assist school districts. First is suspending the 75% attendance requirement. Second, stabilize the pupil count. These are outlined in the attached letter from a number of Michigan statewide education associations. Further issues could continue to be discussed between stakeholders and bill sponsors over the summer.

Specifically, we would like to draw your attention to the following concerns with the current bills:

- The bills reduce the number of statutorily forgiven days due to circumstances outside the control of local school districts from six days down to two. And while the bills propose new e-learning days, that new process would not take effect until the 2021-22 school year. Also, some of these days are called off with hours notice, leaving teachers and students unprepared to switch to a different delivery system in the matter of hours. Reducing the statutorily forgiven days to two may put districts in difficult situations on the random snow day, power outage or other issue that closes a school for a single day on short notice.
- We would also urge careful review of the specifics of the e-learning proposal. For example, House Bill 5910 requires an e-learning plan to offer at least five hours a day of instruction. This conflicts with the age

appropriate standards for daily e-learning contact time put forward by the curriculum experts at MAISA/GELN and others. Moreover, with everything else that districts need to plan for this fall, writing and getting approval from MDE for an additional plan for e-learning days is not feasible.

- The proposal around virtual learning effectively removes the enrollment cap on Michigan's statewide cyber charter schools. It would also permit unlimited virtual dual enrollment and expand dual enrollment to students in any grade without regard to any of the safeguards currently in place. We appreciate the interest that students and parents will have in increased virtual learning options, but these proposals deal with policies that go well beyond expanding virtual learning options.
- The requirement for in-person instruction for students in kindergarten through 5th grade conflicts with the requirements put forward in the MI Safe Schools plan and the recommendations of medical experts.
- The mandate for schools to administer benchmark assessments to students in grades K-8 poses a number of logistical challenges and may not be appropriate for every school. While the Governor's roadmap strongly recommends an assessment of students at the beginning of in-person learning, it ultimately leaves the final decision where it should be: at the local level. However, the requirements in the bill remove local discretion and include timelines, specific assessments and reporting that are unnecessary, duplicative and expensive. It also would require every school in Michigan to reduce much needed instructional time in order to accommodate these assessments.

Again, we would urge the committee to consider the handful of simple, straightforward proposals put forward by the Michigan statewide education associations. What our students and schools need most at this point is certainty that school will be able to resume in the fall and that they will have the resources to provide for their students' needs. And the proposals would provide that certainty within the existing legal framework, negating the need for last minute adjustments in school plans.

Thank you for your consideration of these concerns. We look forward to working with you on these issues as the bills move through the process. Please feel free to contact us with any questions.