



MAPSA Testimony Regarding Sinking Fund Legislation December 9, 2015

Mr Chairman, Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Michigan's 300 plus charter public schools, and their 150,000 students, I am here to oppose the expansion of the use of sinking fund taxes for some public schools.

Our position on funding for all public schools is based on students, and valuing them equitably, no matter where they live or what public school they attend. Sinking Fund tax revenue only creates additional disparities among all our schools. MAPSA's 2015 funding goals are:

Equitable Funding. Narrow the equity gap to fund each child in the State equitably. This can be done by:

- Focusing future funding and policy decisions on the individual student by prioritizing the foundation grant and eliminating discretionary categoricals, and opposing new revenue sources that would be available only to a few school districts.
- When necessary, differentiating funding in a justifiable fashion based on individual student needs—such as poverty, special needs, or accelerated learning—without regard to existing or legacy cost structures of schools or districts, grade levels, or medium of education delivery.

Sinking Fund taxes, if enacted, would further disadvantage charter public schools and many traditional public school districts, creating a greater “privilege” gap between public school students.

Statewide, there continues to be wide discrepancies in the funding available for our public schools and their students. However, expectations for achievement, standards, safety, reporting are appropriately consistent across the state. Our goals as a State should include consistent funding.

Charter public schools are not allowed to levy millages or sell public bonds. By law per pupil funding for charters is at or below the per pupil amount of the geographic host district, *never* above. The current funding gap is about \$1,400 for charter public schools compared to the per pupil funding of the traditional district. Yet, charter public schools build buildings, pay for capital expenses, pay competitive salaries and benefits and in too many cases are denied access to or pay additionally for existing public school buildings.

Charter public schools are also succeeding academically with their students. In fact a report released by the University of Arkansas a year ago found that despite receiving fewer per pupil dollars Michigan charter schools are producing greater results on national math and reading assessments and better long-term economic gains for students than traditional public schools.

Sinking Fund taxes would give only some traditional public school districts new options to access property tax revenue for security and technology purposes. Why should the state create a separate class of school districts, those that have funding privileges vs those that do not? Even an expansion of the use of the sinking funds further creates inequities. Look at the faces of nearly 500 charter school advocates that were here last week, and tell them they don't deserve access to additional funds for security and technology.

Again, we urge you to not support the expansion of Sinking Fund use. Thank you,