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President

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The Honorable Ron Jelinek
Chair
Senate Appropriations Committee

The Honorable Mickey Switalski
Minority Vice Chair
Senate Appropriations Committee

February 18, 2008

Dear Senator Jelinek and Senator Switalski:

The Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals sincerely appreciates your commitment to ensuring that policy related to the Michigan Merit Examination is of the highest quality and maximizes positive outcomes for Michigan's citizenry. The recommendations that follow are the end result of collaboration with you, as well as other key stakeholders. These revisions would **reduce costs, increase efficiencies, and add value to the assessment for both the student and the State of Michigan.**

First, the following amendments to the 2009 School Aid Act will save the State of Michigan approximately \$4.2 M as well as reduce unreported administrative costs to local school districts. These first amendments will make a more student-friendly process thereby encouraging students to participate in further assessment to demonstrate eligibility for early MI Promise assistance.

- If eligibility for early payment of MI Promise funds has not been established by attainment of adequate scores on the Michigan Merit Examination (MME), students will be allowed to use the college readiness exam used within the MME to satisfy eligibility for MI Promise monies.
- The level of success using this alternative will be equivalent to the MME cut score for proficiency established within the MME.
- With the exception of low-income students, this follow up testing will not be provided at State of Michigan expense.

Next, legislated time limits for testing should remain in place. Students should not be expected to sit for more than eight hours to complete the MME. The following provisions will help to ensure this:

- The Department of Education will identify specific content expectations to be taught *before* and *after* the middle of the 11th grade thus enabling teachers to focus on the content covered within the MME. This will be completed by July 1, 2008.
- The college entrance readiness assessment will include a writing component in which students produce a writing sample. No other writing sample shall be included in the MME.
- The time allotted for the State of Michigan developed portion of the MME shall be no more than the time remaining in the eight-hour limit after accounting for the college readiness and workforce skill assessment.

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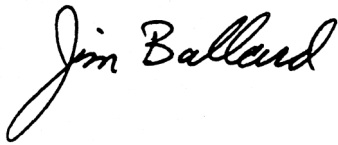
Lastly, increase value in the assessment by adding a third component to the WorkKeys®, which would make all Michigan Students eligible for a nationally recognized work readiness credential. This has already proven to attract employers within the state of Indiana. This piece provides increased value in the assessment to both the student and the State of Michigan, as a whole.

- The Department shall select a workforce ready assessment with all the components necessary to allow a student to be eligible for a nationally recognized workforce ready credential contingent upon adequate performance.

Senator Jelinek and Senator Switalski, we have spoken together in detail with regard to all of the above. The Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals is confident that with your support and legislative skill, our students and their parents, school districts, and the State of Michigan will see needed improvement in our high school assessment. With these changes, Michigan continues to comply with federal requirements as well as having a credentialed work force to attract new employers to the State but most importantly, ***Michigan students will have two tickets of opportunity that children in other states do not have – a ticket for admission into higher education and a ticket which demonstrates employability.***

Once again, thank you for your vision and leadership!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jim Ballard". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "J".

Jim Ballard