

Mr. Chairman and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to share some information regarding the Insight School of Michigan, especially the vision of our school and how we utilize state funding to meet the needs of our students. Personally, I became a founding member of Insight's board because I wanted all students who were not seeing success in their current school, urban, suburban or rural, to have another choice, another chance at success. Our school serves 800 diverse students across the state. 74% of those students qualify for free or reduced lunches, much higher than the state average of 46.3%. We employ 30 teachers and 21 support staff members. Michigan families select our school for a variety of reasons, including bullying, illnesses, injuries, the need to have a flexible school day, and the high-quality curriculum. Michigan teachers choose to teach at our school for of the opportunity to work one-on-one with students and to focus on student learning.

Our school is a public school and, therefore, must comply with public school regulations like administering state assessments, hiring certified teachers, providing a curriculum and materials aligned to state standards, and serving students with special needs. We already must serve our students and comply with regulations with an average of \$5,000 less than traditional schools across the state because our students do not generate any local funding. Additionally, we are required to dedicate 5 percent of funding to a reserve fund, leaving even less money for students. It is imperative, therefore, that our kids receive the same amount of state funding as all other Michigan students. All of these schools have the same obligation to meet students' needs and should receive the same backing.

To meet our students' needs, we spend state education funding in both different and similar ways as traditional public schools. For example, we all employ certified teachers. A few differences include implementation of state testing, serving students with IEPs, and equipping the classroom.

Most traditional schools do not incur expenses to administer state tests because they already have the necessary personnel and facilities - facilities paid for with local funds that our school doesn't generate. Our school must rent venues throughout the state, recruit, train and pay for travel for test proctors, and subsidize parent travel to and from testing sites.

Most traditional schools have speech therapists and other licensed professionals at the school site to serve students with IEPs. Our school must recruit licensed professional across the state and pay for them to get to the students or for students to get to the licensed professional.

Most traditional high school schools, equip a classroom that serves approximately 150 students during the course of a school day. Our school must provide curricular materials to every student in his or her home. All lab kits, hard cover texts and supplemental materials like maps must be

shipped to every home, and collected upon completion of a course. Our school must also ensure "access" to the courses. And while we don't have yellow buses that ensure access, we provide computers and internet to families who need help accessing their courses.

These are just a few of the differences between the cost structure of a traditional school and our school. We are dedicated to spending our state funds on instruction. Our school spends 82 percent of its funding on instructional expenses, well in excess of the national average of 65 percent. If our school is forced to cut 25 percent from its overall budget, these cuts will disproportionately impact instruction, since we dedicate so much funding to instruction in the first place. Consider how any traditional school would possibly cut 25 percent from its budget. Any school would struggle with maintaining mission-critical services with this deep a cut, and no Michigan school has ever been required to cut this deeply.

If these tax cuts are enacted, one of my favorite programs at Insight, the Family Academic Support Team, or FAST, will surely have to grind to a halt. FAST focuses on early identification of children who need support of many types and implements solutions right away, before a child will get even farther behind than they already are. Critical programs like this will be lost if our funding is cut.

For our school, we may have to require families travel longer distances to state testing sites, which puts our students at additional disadvantages when taking these critically important tests. We may need to limit the amount of curricular materials students receive. We may need to increase teacher ratios. All of the areas we may cut will directly impact instruction.

My board and I hope you appreciate that all public school students in the state deserve the same funding. Although our school spends funding in a different way compared to traditional schools, we are still a public school and required to comply with public school regulations. This cut will cause us to cut directly into instructional spending and make cuts that will directly affect the education we give to our kids. Please continue to fund our students at the same level of all Michigan students. Thank you.

Angela Boldrey
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