



March 2, 2015

Dear Members of the Joint Subcommittee for Higher Education Appropriations,

Given the hour, I will be mercifully brief.

The Center for Michigan seeks to be useful to policymakers in two ways – through our public opinion research and through the in-depth, nonpartisan, data-driven journalism of Bridge Magazine (www.bridgemi.com).

Each year, through our public engagement campaigns, we hold more than 100 statewide community meetings on important public issues. And we supplement those meetings with large-sample polling. In 2015, we focused our public engagement work in large part on college affordability issues.

We found the Michigan public to be extremely concerned with college affordability issues. And with good reason. Inflation adjusted tuition at Michigan's 15 public universities rose 86 percent from 2001 to 2014. As costs have risen, families have less ability to pay – median household income in Michigan dropped 22 percent from 1999 to 2013. Among the responses to these trends: student loans have more than doubled and will likely total \$2 billion just for this year at Michigan's 15 public universities.

Fortunately, the public has solid ideas to improve college affordability. In gathering the ideas of 5,000 Michigan residents in 150 community meetings and through polls last year, more than eight out of ten told us they wanted higher state funding of higher education. More than eight out of ten also told us they wanted intensified campus efficiency and accountability. And, the public favors new approaches, such as intensified dual enrollment programs, pay to stay tuition plans, and pay it forward tuition plans.

We have provided committee members with a packet today including the full results of our 2015 public meetings and surveys and numerous in-depth Bridge Magazine reports on college affordability issues. We are glad to discuss these matters further with any of you at any time. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Bebow". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "B".

John Bebow
President & CEO
The Center for Michigan / Bridge Magazine