

Oct. 13, 2020

Dear Members of the House Ways & Means Committee,

Today, Senate Bill 1108 will be before your committee. This legislation would make changes to the Open Meetings Act and allow school boards, city councils and other public bodies to hold meetings virtually. After the Michigan Supreme Court's opinion issued on Oct. 2, 2020, the need for the bill was amplified.

This bill would extend the ability to hold virtual board meetings through the end of the calendar year and applies retroactively to April 30, 2020. The Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators, Michigan Association of School Boards and Michigan Association of Superintendents and Administrators urge your quick action.

The retroactivity piece of this bill is important to us as it gives certainty to all of those decisions that were made in virtual meetings after April 30. As you know, schools faced a lot of decisions regarding COVID-19 and their operations since March. Plans had to be adopted regarding the closing of schools last year and reopening this year and this would avoid any further controversy over those decisions. Also, school boards are required by law to meet at least once a month and, with the passage of the Return to Learn legislation in August, they are now required to vote once a month as well.

This bill will help protect our medically vulnerable members, those who live with medically vulnerable people, and those in areas that see outbreaks and allow them to continue with the type of meeting they see fit through the end of 2020.

The experiences we have had during this pandemic prove that virtual meetings can be as productive and inclusive as in-person meetings. And quite often the participation rate has been higher with a virtual option. We urge swift action on SB 1108 to preserve robust public participation in meetings and public health and safety.

Please let us know if you have any questions.

Thank you for your consideration,

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