Richard J. Halik

June 1, 2015

Michigan State Senate
Education Committee
P.O. Box 30036
Lansing, MI 48909-7536

Dear Chairman Pavlov and Members of the Education Committee:

As Superintendent Emeritus of the Lansing School District, I would like to explain the contract that allows public "pension spiking" for MEA President Steve Cook and offer my support of Senate Bill 279.

On September 1, 1993, I served as Superintendent of the Lansing Public School District when Steve Cook, one of our paraprofessionals, was granted a leave of absence for the purpose of serving as a state officer with the MEA. Because we wanted to maintain a positive working relationship with the state's largest teacher's union, the district was honored to have one of our own serve in a prestigious capacity.

However, at the time of the contract, we thought Mr. Cook's leave of absence would be short-term and in no way envisioned that his pension would have any connection to the contract later in his career. In the years that followed, I attempted to revise the contract with our human resources department, to no avail. Since then, I've retired from my position and have hoped that the state legislature would play a role in closing the loophole that allowed Cook's situation to occur.

Let me be clear, my position on this issue is purely out of principle. Mr. Cook was a wonderful employee and I have nothing against him. But, I am against allowing employees of a private union to collect a pension based on anything but their salary at the time they served Michigan's children in our great classrooms as public school employees.

For those reasons, I respectfully urge members of the committee to support Senate Bill 279.

Sincerely,

Richard J. Halik, Ph.D.

Richard J. Halik, Ph.D.
Superintendent Emeritus, Lansing School District