

Michigan PTA 2022 Advocacy

Michigan PTA Takes Action Together to achieve the Education, Educational Success and Well-Being of Every Child.

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to showcase the many inequities which have long existed within our education system. The inequities are unacceptable. The ongoing phase of 'returning to school' is an important chance to ensure every child has every opportunity to reach their fullest potential, regardless of their zip code. The State Legislature, District and School Board teams, and educational professionals have the power to help ensure the educational success of all children and make every child's potential a reality in Michigan. Michigan PTA and our many members across the state advocate together, with one voice, to ensure that every child has access to a fair and equitable education in Michigan and across the United States.

That is why today, Michigan PTA is calling upon our Members of our State Legislature, school districts, and schools to:

- 1. Support Increased School Funding.** Make needed investments in education for continued COVID relief to Michigan Schools to provide a safe environment and maximize education delivery for our children, teachers, and administrators across the state.
- 2. Oppose the two *Let MI Kids Learn* Petitions.** If these petition campaigns are successful, Michigan PTA is asking Michigan legislators not to pass legislation to enact them into law.
- 3. Support Seizure Safe Schools Bill HB4970.** Pass Seizure Safe Schools legislation to ensure that schools are well-equipped with the tools necessary to provide a safe and enriching environment for students living with epilepsy and seizure disorders.
- 4. Support Increased School Safety.** Continue their commitment to Safe and Supportive Schools through legislation and funding, working on both prevention and treatment for all students.

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1. Support Increased School Funding. Make needed investments in education for continued COVID relief to Michigan schools to provide a safe environment and maximize education delivery for our children, teachers, and administrators across the state.

Michigan PTA appreciates the education-related funding which the federal and state government has provided thus far in COVID relief packages. However, children, families, educators, and public schools are still facing numerous critical and immediate needs, which must be addressed with additional Michigan funding for resources for Michigan children. Schools across Michigan must have support to address the continued safety of children, the trauma of the pandemic and the myriad of instructional issues, including the effects of learning loss and the digital divide. Michigan had the lowest education revenue growth of all 50 states between 1995 and 2015.

Michigan PTA urges our state legislature to create legislation and policies which address key areas:

- In addition to the one-time funding resources for in-person instruction and remote education bring back per pupil funding to previous 2008-2009 funding levels.
- Increased support for Title I and dedicated IDEA funding
- Greater fiscal accountability for education in Michigan. Standardized reporting requirements for continuity across districts for true transparency.
- Funding additional resources for early childhood learning, family engagement in education; and increased funding for child nutrition programs.

To encourage improvement in education across the state we ask the Michigan legislature to:

- SUPPORT legislation and policies which move Michigan to become one of the leaders in school funding, and support programs in key areas to promote an increase in student performance.
- SUPPORT the governor's [\\$18.4 billion preK-12 education budget proposal](#) that would increase the state's per-student foundation allowance by 5%, bringing it to \$9,135. Highlighting: additional funding for districts in special education, at-risk students, English language learners, students enrolled in career technical education programs.
- SUPPORT programs to [help students experiencing mental health issues](#) – this ongoing problem from before the pandemic is exacerbated by the ongoing public health crisis and school safety issues. Fund more mental health professionals in schools and expand training, safety resources for educators.
- SUPPORT educators with a [four-year plan to pay educator retention bonuses](#), alongside proposals to provide scholarships for aspiring educators, pay stipends to student teachers, and offer funding for districts' "grow-your-own" programs, to address an urgent educator shortage.
- PROTECT THE SCHOOL AID FUND - changes to state tax policy that impact the School Aid Fund and local revenues must create no negative tax revenue changes for the districts. (last revised 3-5-22)

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2. Oppose the two *Let MI Kids Learn* Petitions. If these petition campaigns are successful, Michigan PTA is asking Michigan legislators not to pass legislation to enact them into law.

There are two distinct petition drives led by a Betsy DeVos group, [Let Kids Learn \(letmikiidslearn.com\)](http://letmikiidslearn.com), in the State of Michigan with a deadline of June 4, 2022, for signatures:

- o A: Student Opportunity Scholarships
- o B: Tax Credits for individuals and companies

These petitions are being promoted to the public as a method to improve education for children in Michigan and to create more choice for children's education. There is a strong possibility that, if these petitions gain enough signatures by the deadline, they could be presented to the legislature and take advantage of a process that allows for immediate passage by the legislature to make these proposals law. They would never reach the ballot to be voted on by the public. If this path was taken there is no opportunity for the public to vote or for the Governor to veto. Michigan PTA is asking the legislature not to enact these petition initiatives into law in the State of Michigan, by any method.

While Federal funding is boosting educational spending in the short term, in 2019 the Detroit News ranked Michigan dead last among all the states in funding growth. 90% of Michigan students attend public school. *Let MI Kids Learn* will take 500 million dollars out of the School Aid Fund and put that money, not in the hands of kids, but in the hands of donors to use for tax credits. Michigan PTA supports families in making the best educational choice for their families, but optimizing funding for all students in their local communities will allow for the best outcomes for all of Michigan's children.

Michigan PTA opposes the *Let MI Kids Learn* Petitions because:

1. This initiative allows for tax credits to divert up to \$500 million in tax revenue away from the School Aid Fund annually – funds that are intended to meet the needs of the 90% of Michigan students who attend K-12 public schools (both our neighborhood and public-school academies).
2. The cap for this tax credit increases over time. The amount of tax credits can vary from year to year; this fluctuation will directly impact the School Aid Fund and Foundation Allowance; thus, school districts would have more difficulty budgeting each year.
3. Donors can already donate to private schools; but this initiative, per a Senate Fiscal Agency Review analysis, the added administrative costs would be over \$100 million.
4. Similar initiatives have been routinely rejected by Michiganders. Public money should be used to support public schools that are open to all; not private, for-profit institutions that are able to pick and choose their students.

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5. Public schools need more funding, not less.
6. Many private schools do not accept children with disabilities, so this initiative will leave students with disabilities in public schools that are left with less funding to provide for their needs.
7. This would allow for indirect aid to nonpublic schools, which Michigan's Constitution specifically prohibits.
8. Changes like this should be decided on by a ballot initiative so that all Michiganders to have an opportunity to vote, and not only 340K people.

Michigan PTA is asking the Michigan legislature to support public education for students across the state by:

- **Not allowing these petition drives to be voted on by the legislature to become immediate law**
- **Keeping public education money for public education and not redirecting it to private schools or companies**
- **Making the education of all public schoolchildren in Michigan a priority**

(last revised 3-4-2022)

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3: Support Seizure Safe Schools Bill HB4970. Michigan PTA is asking our Michigan legislators to pass Seizure Safe Schools legislation to ensure that schools are well-equipped with the tools necessary to provide a safe and enriching environment for students living with epilepsy and seizure disorders.

The legislation makes certain that school personnel, including nurses, teachers, and volunteers, are not only prepared but can recognize and respond appropriately and efficiently to a student experiencing a seizure. Even more importantly, it safeguards physician-directed care in the school setting, allowing students to access necessary and oftentimes life-saving medication. Lastly, by bringing awareness to the entire educational community, students living with epilepsy or a seizure disorder can feel safe in school, reach their full academic potential, and build meaningful friendships without fear of being stigmatized.

Epilepsy is a disease or disorder of the brain which causes reoccurring seizures. There are many different types of seizures and varying levels of seizure control. Epilepsy is the fourth most common neurological disorder in the country. Approximately 1 in 26 people will develop epilepsy at some point in their lifetime.

At least 13,600 children are living with epilepsy in Michigan. Compared with students with other health concerns, students aged 6–17 years with epilepsy are more likely to miss 11 or more days of school a year. Michigan ranks 48th out of 50 states with a ratio of 4,204 students per school nurse. And only 17.2% of lead health education teachers in Michigan secondary schools receive professional development on epilepsy or seizures.

Michigan PTA supports the Seizure Safe Schools Bill (HB4970) which has four components:

- **School personnel are required to complete a seizure recognition and first-aid response training.**
- **Mandates that a Seizure Action Plan is made part of the student's file and made available for school personnel and volunteers responsible for the student.**
- **Ensures that any FDA-approved medication prescribed by the treating physician is administered to the student living with epilepsy.**
- **Includes a Good Samaritan clause (which offers limited protection to someone who attempts to help a person in distress).**

(last revised 3-10-2022)

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4: Support Increased School Safety. Michigan PTA is asking our Michigan legislators to continue their commitment to Safe and Supportive Schools through legislation and funding, working on both prevention and treatment for all students.

All students and educators have a right to safety, yet schools are experiencing increasingly frequent incidents that are having a devastating, long-term impact on students, parents, educators, and the community. A founding principle of the PTA's mission is to promote the safety and well-being of all children and youth. School safety is a critical priority for all parents, educators, students, and community members that cannot be taken for granted. Students and educators have a right to attend schools that are safe and conducive to learning and achievement, yet schools often experience critical incidents such as suicide, natural disasters, or a mass casualty event that have a devastating impact on students, parents, educators, and the community.

The Covid 19 pandemic highlighted an already concerning mental health crisis in Michigan's children and adolescents. The Oxford High School shooting highlighted the tragic cost of unsecured firearms around minors.

Michigan PTA is asking our Michigan legislators to:

- 1. Continue working with the Michigan Department of Education after the passage of Senate Bill 321 to develop standards for educators to recognize mental health needs and refer students for help.**
- 2. Support the Governor's mental health budget for students to increase screenings, teacher training, the number of mental health professionals and counselors in schools, open new school-based health centers and expand specialized services for students with severe mental health needs.**
- 3. Support Secure Firearm Storage Bills (House Bills 5066-5069 and/or Senate Bill 550-553) that would require owners to properly secure firearms and make them inaccessible to minors in their home, in order to prevent injury or death.**

Together, we can give our children support by providing them safety - the safety of a secure firearm; the safety of trained teachers; the safety of support personnel. Michigan PTA and National PTA continue to support all efforts for safe schools in anti-bullying, building resources, cybersecurity, district support, emergency planning, mental health, and public health. Children who feel safe and secure, who feel seen and heard, are better able to meet learning standards, do well in school and be prepared for college, trade school and beyond.

(last revised 3-2-2022)