

Community Leaders Issue Statement Calling for More Funding Equity Following Signing of School Aid Budget

The following civil rights, civic and business leaders have joined together to issue the statement below upon Gov. Whitmer's signing of the School Aid Budget for Fiscal Year 2020-21: Mike Jandernoa (42 North Partners), Hassan Jaber (ACCESS), Colleen Allen (Autism Alliance of Michigan), Alice G. Thompson (BFDI Educational Services, Inc.), Todd M. Jacobs (Community Foundation for Muskegon County), Jametta Lilly (Detroit Parent Network), Dave Meador (DTE Energy), Amber Arellano (The Education Trust-Midwest), Monique Marks (Franklin Wright Settlements Inc.), Diana Sieger (Grand Rapids Community Foundation), Holly Windram (Hope Network's Michigan Education Corps), Deidre Bounds (Ignite Social Media), Nicole Wells Stallworth (MacDowell Preparatory Academy), Ken Whipple (Michigan Achieves! Leadership Council), Mike Larson (Michigan Association of United Ways), and Darienne D. Hudson, Ed.D. (United Way for Southeastern Michigan),

“Together, we applaud state lawmakers and the Governor for working across party lines to finalize an on-time budget that prioritizes public education. Maintaining student funding in such a challenging fiscal climate is significant during a global pandemic and time of great division in our country. We thank the Governor and leaders on both sides of the aisle for their strong collaboration – and their commitment to education.

“Students, teachers and families are being asked to continue learning during extraordinarily trying circumstances. This budget will help to address the unique learning needs of students by screening early elementary school students for characteristics of dyslexia; continuing to measure the impact of early literacy initiatives; and measuring student learning through aligned benchmark assessments that may be administered in the classroom or at home.

“More, however, must be done in the future to address the unique learning needs of students who have long been underserved and disproportionately impacted by the health, economic and educational crises resulting from COVID-19. This includes students of color, students with disabilities, English learners, and students from low-income families. Maintaining funding for the education of these student groups this year is important but is not enough, especially as the research suggests that the COVID-19 pandemic is continuing to exacerbate opportunity and achievement gaps for many Michigan students.

“As advocates for an exceptional education for every Michigan student, we urge state leaders to build upon this budget to fund schools in a manner that reflects the unique needs of their student body. Ensuring greater transparency for school funding remains critical so that funds intended to benefit vulnerable students reach the classrooms they attend and are used effectively to improve their educational opportunities and access.”

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