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## The Education Trust—Midwest

March 9, 2021

### **Testimony in support of House Bills 4055 and 4056**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of House Bills 4055 and 4056. Together, these bills would advance important policies for ensuring that postsecondary education is within reach for students.

**House Bills 4055 and 4056** address important challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic, to ensure that this pandemic does not negatively impact the ability for Michigan students to finance their postsecondary education.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a highly disruptive, direct impact on postsecondary education and prompted uncertainty about the school year now underway. The health and related economic crisis also may have an impact on postsecondary enrollment.

We are already seeing evidence of these disruptions in critical postsecondary indicators. For example, [Michigan's FAFSA \(Free Application for Federal Student Aid\) completion rates are down 14 percent](#) compared to the same time last year. The FAFSA is a common financial aid form required for federal financial aid, as well as many institutional and private financial aid programs.

House Bill 4056 addresses this reality by temporarily extending the time period that eligible students have for using tuition grants for up to two additional semesters, if they are currently enrolled and were enrolled last spring.

Another educational impact of the pandemic last spring was the cancellation of year-end assessments. This includes the SAT, provided by the State annually to high school juniors during the school day. Among other uses, student SAT scores are part of the qualifying criteria for the need and merit-based Michigan Competitive Scholarship.

Under House Bill 4055, scholastic achievement may be used to temporarily replace the competitive scholarship eligibility requirement, usually satisfied by SAT score, for scholarship award eligibility during the 2020-2021 school year. The legislation also temporarily extends by one year the time period that scholarship recipients have to completely spend their scholarship, for students enrolled this academic year and last spring.

Michigan's students, families and communities are best served when postsecondary opportunities are available and accessible. House Bills 4055 and 4056 would all help to address barriers to postsecondary accessibility to Michigan students. We urge you to support these efforts and thank you for your focus on this important topic.