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Colleen Allen, Ph.D.
President and CEO

Letter to Michigan Senate and Congressional Delegation

June 29, 2020

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The Honorable Gary Peters
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jack Bergman (1st)
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Justin Amash (3rd)
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Dan Kildee (5th)
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tim Walberg (7th)
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Andy Levin (9th)
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Haley Stevens (11th)
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rashida Tlaib (13th)
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bill Huizenga (2nd)
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Moolenaar (4th)
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Fred Upton (6th)
United States House of Representatives
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The Honorable Elissa Slotkin (8th)
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Paul Mitchell (10th)
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Debbie Dingell (12th)
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Brenda Lawrence (14th)
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515



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Dear Michigan Senate and Michigan Congressional delegation:

We write today to strongly urge you to address state revenue shortfalls that are impacting school funding, which are in need of **immediate** assistance to assure schools in Michigan have the resources required to ensure student success for this upcoming school year.

We are a coalition comprised of the top leaders for policy and administration for Special Education in the state of Michigan. Our coalition represents a powerful group of advocates for Students with Disabilities, who come from diverse backgrounds and areas of expertise, all with the common goal of assuring Students with Disabilities receive the education they require so they have the very best opportunity for success upon leaving school.

We were honored to be joined by Senators Peters and Stabenow as well as several members of the Michigan Congressional delegation – Representatives Dingell, Levin, Moolenaar, Tlaib, and Walberg on June 18 to discuss ideas about how our students can be better supported in their learning environments. We appreciate your time and commitment.

Many of our delegation members are passionate about these issues and serve on committees that can significantly impact the challenges we face today.

While we discussed a variety of issues, this letter really addresses the **immediate crisis** our school systems face as they plan for school this fall. As you well know, we are amid an unprecedented health crisis in our country. This has caused mass shutdowns of businesses to protect citizens from spread of COVID-19. Consequently, this has led to a significant shortfall of tax revenues used to fund school operations.

This issue must be addressed, or our educational programs will suffer. And we know that those who will be impacted the most are our most vulnerable students – including Students with Disabilities. It has become abundantly clear during the past few months of remote learning in our state that our



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Students with Disabilities need more support to assure they will flourish in a changed environment.

Here in Michigan, our tax revenue shortfalls are estimated over \$3 billion this year and over \$3 billion next year. ***If this shortfall is not addressed, school districts in Michigan are expected to lose up to \$700 per student both this year and next year.*** This amounts to millions of dollars in each of our school systems, forcing reductions in services, and this comes on the heels of knowing they will have new, added costs next year to assure school can open safely. We know that students will be shortchanged if nothing is done, and we know this will disproportionately impact students that need the most help – including Students with Disabilities.

In this ***immediate crisis***, we have two direct asks of you:

1) Support the currently proposed Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solution (HEROES) Act passed in the House of Representative or ensure that the HEROES Act provisions for education funding support remain intact through any proposal from the Senate. Action must be taken **right now**. Simply approving one or the other in one chamber, with no concurrence is, frankly, as good as doing nothing. This is unacceptable.

You must pass some form of state stimulus in both chambers to assure school systems can operate this fall. Not only do our Students with Disabilities need your support, but so do their parents and our nation's economy, which will be impacted if parents cannot get back to work. This state support has precedence. It occurred back in 2008, during the Great Recession and this current crisis needs a similar federal response.

2) We ask that you ***allow flexibility in spending current federal CARES dollars*** allocated to states. This will allow states to prioritize the dollars to the most important areas, such as education.



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Taking action, right now, will allow school systems to complete the necessary planning for the start of next school year. Our students are counting on you. Please let us know how you plan to get this important work done.

On behalf of the thousands of Students with Disabilities in our state, and their parents, thank you for your interest and for working on their behalf. We appreciate you listening to our voices that have come together on their behalf and look forward to continued dialogue on how we can make sure all of our students succeed.

Sincerely,

Special Education Coalition of Michigan
as the undersigned individual representatives

/S/ Dr. Colleen Allen
CEO, Autism Alliance of Michigan (AAoM)

/S/ Dave Meador
Vice Chairman, DTE Energy
AAoM Board Chair

/S/ Ron Fournier
President, Truscott Rossman
AAoM Vice Chair

/S/ Brian Calley
Fmr. Lieutenant Governor
President, Small Business Administration
AAoM Board member

/S/ Representative Sheryl Kennedy, Ph.D.
Michigan House of Representatives, 48th District



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/S/ Michelle Fecteau
Secretary, State Board of Education
AAoM Board member

/S/ Scott Koenigsknecht, Ph.D.
Deputy Superintendent, Michigan Department of Education (MDE)

/S/ Dr. Randy Liepa
Superintendent, Wayne RESA

/S/ Lohren Nzoma
Sr. Executive Director of Exceptional Student Education, Detroit Public
School Community District (DPSCD)

/S/ Justin Michalak
Assistant Superintendent, Special Education & Student Services, Macomb
Intermediate School District (MISD)
Member, Governor Whitmer's Return to School Advisory Council

/S/ Kris Keranen
Director of Education Advocacy, Michigan Protection & Advocacy Service,
Inc. (MPAS)

/S/ Kanika Littleton
Director, Michigan Alliance for Families (MAF)

/S/ Kristin Totten
Education Attorney, ACLU of Michigan

/S/ Paula Herbart
President, Michigan Education Association (MEA)

/S/ David Hecker
President, American Federation of Teachers (AFT)



Help. Hope. Answers. Today.

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/S/ Abby Cypher
CEO, All Individuals Matter, LLC

/S/ Melody Arabo
2015 Teacher of the Year, U.S. Dept. of Education Teacher Ambassador
Fellow

/S/ Dr. Sally Burton-Hoyle
Professor, Special Education, Eastern Michigan University
Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee (IACC)

/S/ Dr. Susan L. Gabel
Professor, Inclusive Education, Wayne State University

/S/ Brian Gutman
Director External Relations, The Education Trust-Midwest

/S/ Liz Bauer
Fmr. State Board of Education

/S/ Lyn Beekman
Special Education Solutions, LLC

/S/ David Moss
Associate Professor, Disabilities Clinic, Wayne State University Law School

/S/ Debra Chopp
Director, Pediatric Advocacy Clinic, University of Michigan Law School

/S/ Michele Corey
Vice President for Programs, Michigan's Children

/S/ Peri Stone-Palmquist
Executive Director, Student Advocacy Center of Michigan

/S/ Heather Eckner
Executive Director, A2IDEAS Special Education Advocacy
AAoM education consultant



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