



Michigan Parents for Schools

*Parents working for excellent public schools
—for our children, our communities, and our future.*

Steven J. Norton
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Jennifer Tanau
Board Chair

Janice Lieberman
Secretary

Jeannette Jackson
Treasurer

The Honorable Phil Pavlov, Chair
Senate Education Committee
905 Farnum Building
Lansing, MI 48909

21 June 2011

Dear Chairman Pavlov,

On behalf of parent activists from across Michigan, I write to you today asking that your Committee refrain from reporting out the “tenure bills” (HB 4625, HB 4626, HB 4627 and HB 4628), currently before your committee, in their current form.

Michigan Parents for Schools is a non-profit, public interest advocacy organization working to ensure that our public schools have the tools and resources to provide an excellent education to all our children. Part of that mission is to encourage careful and informed structural changes to Michigan public schools, so that every child can receive an excellent education—regardless of where they live or the resources that may be available to their family. Clearly, systems that would foster high quality teaching in our schools are an important part of that effort.

However, we believe that the changes embedded in this package of bills, which dramatically revise how teachers will be evaluated, not only will not achieve their stated goal but have the potential to do serious damage to our public schools.

An effective and productive system of teacher evaluation must be the product of collaboration and consultation among classroom teachers, school administrators, and district officials. It must also focus on factors which reflect the full range of responsibilities we give to our children’s teachers, not just those pieces which are easy (and inexpensive) to measure. These bills fail on both counts, in our view. A thorough evaluation system will require additional resources to be effective, but our schools have faced declining resources for some years now.

Moreover, we fear that the changes, when combined, will inevitably lead school officials to let employee cost factors to color their judgements on teacher effectiveness. This kind of hidden incentive would undermine the whole effort to improve teaching quality and student outcomes. The damage would take many years to reverse.

Whatever changes we make to our schools must be carefully considered and keep our ultimate goal—children who grow to become involved citizens and productive members of the community—at the forefront. We do not believe that these bills meet that standard. I attach an article published to our web site which outlines these arguments in more detail. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Steven J. Norton, Executive Director

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