

November 5, 2021

Michigan House of Representatives
State Capitol Building
Lansing, MI 48909-7514

Representatives,

I am deeply committed to putting Michigan students and parents first and am proud of what we have achieved for Michigan children. Together, we have improved opportunities and outcomes for more than 1.4 million kids across Michigan by:

- expanding the Great Start Readiness Program to serve more than 17,000 additional four year-olds;
- making more than 105,000 more Michigan children eligible for low- or no-cost child care; and,
- making the largest educational investment in our state's history three years in a row – tripling the number of literacy coaches, hiring more counselors, providing MI Classroom Heroes grants to 138,000 teachers, and finally closing the nearly three decades-long funding gap.

And we did it all without raising taxes one dime.

Proponents say House Bills 5404 and 5405 promote philanthropy, but any Michigander can already donate money to an educational nonprofit and receive a write-off on their taxes. This legislation would require Michigan taxpayers to foot the bill for any money a person gives to certain private education organizations, costing as much as \$500 million in 2022 alone. Simply put, our schools cannot provide the high-quality education our kids deserve if we turn private schools into tax shelters for the wealthy.

The movement to privatize education in this state has been a catastrophic failure, causing Michigan students to fall behind the rest of the nation. As a result of this movement, Michigan now has by far the largest proportion of for-profit charters in the country yet was one of only five states where reading attainment actually declined between 2003 and 2018. Redirecting public school dollars for private gain is not only ineffective, it has been roundly rejected by Michigan voters, with more than 69% voting “no” on a proposal that would have allowed the use of tuition vouchers for nonpublic schools. Since I was elected governor, I have consistently put students and parents first and we have begun to reverse decades of disinvestment in public education. I am vetoing Enrolled House Bills 5404 and 5405 because they would undo much of that good work.

Nevertheless, I would be proud to support common sense bills that help all families access high-quality education and child care, including legislation:

- fixing the third-grade reading law to eliminate punitive retention requirements;
- giving child care providers more flexibility so that they can serve more children; and,

- preventing disruption in student learning by allowing students to move seamlessly between in-person instruction and virtual school.

I am willing to work with anyone who shares these goals to get things done for Michigan students and parents.

Sincerely,

Gretchen Whitmer
Governor