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MICHIGAN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

KEVIN A. ELSENHEIMER

STATE REPRESENTATIVE

ASSOCIATE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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AND URBAN POLICY COMMITTEE
VICE-CHAIR, OVERSIGHT,
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MEMBER, JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
MEMBER, NATURAL RESOURCES,
GREAT LAKES, LAND USE, AND
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

January 11, 2007

The Honorable Jennifer M. Granholm
Governor, State of Michigan
Post Office Box 30013
Lansing, MI 48909

Dear Governor Granholm,

I would like to take this time to express my concerns over a potential executive order which would require a pro-rata cut in the per-pupil foundation grant in the 2007 school-aid budget. After January's Revenue Estimating Conference, should you determine a cut in the foundation grant is required, I urge you to consider holding harmless schools that currently receive funding at or slightly above the base foundation grant level.

We are all aware of the challenges posed by what you have described as Michigan's "structural deficit." Regardless of whether we resolve the imbalance between state spending and state revenues by cutting spending or increasing revenues, I would assume that among other things, the potential of a cut to the promised foundation grant increase and \$23 equity payment set forth in Public Act 342 of 2006 (Section 22c) is under consideration by your administration. Resisting such action and instead fairly apportioning any necessary reductions will help to meet the moral and legal obligation of the state to fairly educate all children in Michigan.

As you know, prior to the 2007 budget bills, the base foundation grant in this state was \$6,875. There are approximately 389 school districts and 659,732 children who receive this base foundation grant. These children attend schools in nearly every county in this state. The remaining 1,022,893 children can receive up to, in extreme cases, \$15,000 in per-pupil funding.

I offer for consideration two high schools of relatively equivalent size and class offerings. Gaylord High School, with a senior class of roughly 250, offers much the same curriculum as that of Farmington High School, which has a senior class size of slightly more than 290. Both have French and Spanish instruction, while Farmington also offers German and Japanese. Both have impressive social studies and technological programs. Yet Farmington is funded at \$10,452 per student, while Gaylord is funded at \$7,085 per student. Is there a fitting explanation as to why this is the case, or more importantly for policy makers, why it should continue to be the case?



To paraphrase Justice Hugo Black, "There can be no equal justice where the kind of [education] a man gets depends on the amount of money he has." Farmington has recently produced four national merit scholars, while Gaylord has produced two. Perhaps if Gaylord had the resources to offer class selections like Japanese and German, the potential for more merit scholars would improve.

The students in our base-foundation grant districts deserve from you and the state of Michigan justice in the upcoming budget reconciliation. In absence of receiving that justice, I invite you to explain to me and to the parents of the 659,732 students raising their families in base-foundation districts why their children are worth less of our state's resources than other students in the state.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kevin". The signature is stylized with a large initial 'K' and a dot above the 'i'.

Kevin A. Elsenheimer
State Representative
105th House District