

House Education Committee

Senate Bill 619

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Good Morning Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to testify before you this morning.

I am not here representing my board of education, though they know that I'm here. I am also not representing any of the professional associations to which I belong. I am here representing my own views as a public school superintendent, and I'm here representing children and families for whom the traditional public school model is not the best fit.

I am here in support of Senate Bill 619, though as you'll soon learn, I support it with some changes. Education changes at about the same rate as mountains change due to normal climatic conditions. Generations and generations pass with little or no perceptible change. Online or "cyber" education will accelerate this change - I believe for the good of our children, our state, and our country. For this reason, I support Senate Bill 619.

Here are the modifications that I submit for your consideration.

- We need to preserve a strong traditional public school option, but it is increasingly clear that the traditional model is leaving too many behind, and we will only reach those students if we explore creative solutions. Cyber education is one of those creative alternatives. As you consider the potential impact of this bill, I'm urging you to avoid leaving traditional public

schools behind in this field of innovative education.

- This bill would remove caps for cyber schools, yet at Manistee Area Public Schools we currently have a cap of 25% of our 6-12 population - about 200 students - and we have this cap for only 1 year at a time. The solution? Remove our caps. Give traditional public schools that have the initiative and drive the same right to innovate that you would give to cyber schools.
- Cyber schools are non-union - make the staffing, pay, and union membership of all employees of online programs at traditional public schools "prohibited subjects of bargaining" for at least 5 years - thereby, giving traditional public schools that have the initiative and drive the same right to innovate that you would give to cyber schools.
- Charters can use 3rd-party staffing for instructional services. Allow for the 3rd-party staffing of mentors, teachers, and any other employees of online programs at traditional public schools - thereby giving traditional public schools that have the initiative and drive the same right to innovate that you would give to cyber schools.
- "Up north" districts are typically larger geographically. The Manistee Area Public Schools' school-of-choice area encompasses 10 counties. Allow Manistee and all traditional public schools with online programs to set up tutorial labs anywhere in our school-of-choice area to better serve the students who have chosen our online program.
- Testing for online students should be made as accessible as possible. Make every local public school district a state testing site - for a fee of say \$50 per student - for any online student who cannot easily get to his/her enrolling district. This would, of course, be contingent on available space at each local public school.
- On the subject of accessibility, I urge you to consider all the enriching opportunities an online education offered through a *local* traditional public school can open up to its students that the statewide cybers cannot. An online option given to students because their nearby local district has been encouraged to innovate and offers it's own cyber education program, would

allow students to round out their social and educational experience with band, athletics, forensics, clubs, prom...any number of extracurricular activities. Traditional public schools can accomplish this if this historic and future-focused bill is broadened to give traditional public schools that have the initiative and drive the same right to innovate that you would give to cyber schools.

- Traditional public schooling continues to work very well for thousands of students - producing doctors, lawyers, teachers, laborers, politicians, and members of many other noble professions. I know in Manistee we will continue to support - and improve - our traditional public school model. However, given the necessary tools and freed of unnecessary restrictions, I also know, without a doubt, that we and many other school districts will participate in bringing forth quality alternatives for the students and families who want or need an innovative option.

I support Senate Bill 619 - and I believe this bill is the key to unlocking those options for all of Michigan's students if modified as I've outlined. I implore you to give traditional public schools that have the initiative and drive the same right to innovate that you would give to cyber schools..

Thank you once again for allowing me to address this committee regarding this forward-thinking legislation. As our representatives you are faced with very tough decisions and I, for one, am grateful you have the courage to serve in these challenging times.

