Testimony Summary of Michigan Association of Administrators of Special Education

Submitted by: MAASE Immediate Past President Dr. Dawn Bentley, Executive Director of Special Education, Livingston ESA

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Critical Shortage of Special Education Personnel in Michigan

- MAASE strongly urges support for HB 4059 to allow the use of post-2010 school retirees in critical shortage areas, substitute teacher and instructional coach positions, removing the sunset clause of previous legislation.
- In 2014-15, 12.77%, or 199,087, of students in Michigan had Individualized Education Programs, or IEPs.
- Michigan schools have struggled to hire and retain qualified special education staff for over twenty years. This is a long-standing nationwide shortage.
- Providing education to students with unique needs in today's climate of increasing accountability and declining resources is challenging.
- If schools are unable to fill vacancies for special education professionals, access to quality education suffers for students who are the most at-risk.
- Our association collected information from our members this month. Respondents from across the state indicated a current shortage exists in 12 critical areas:
    - 72% Special Education Teachers:
        - 31% secondary special educators
        - 21% center program special educators
        - 20% elementary special educators
    - 56% School Psychologist
    - 41% Speech Language Pathologist
    - 15% School Social Worker
    - 13% Special Education Director or Supervisor
    - 13% Physical Therapist
    - 12% Occupational Therapist or Certified Occupational Therapy Assistant
    - 8% Teacher or Program Consultant, particularly in low-incidence disabilities such as Deaf/Hard of Hearing and Visual Impairments
    - 8% Substitute Teachers
- When we surveyed our members at the expiration of the critical shortage waiver, 83% of respondents indicated they were experiencing problems as a result of the sunset on the previous legislation.
- So what are folks with shortages currently doing?
    - 63% are adding children to other staff caseloads, thereby decreasing their effectiveness in meeting the needs of children for whom they are responsible overall
    - 56% are utilizing contract service companies, a move which is not preferred, and which we know does nothing to aid the Michigan teacher retirement system's unfunded liabilities
    - 47% have hired back recent retirees with the necessary credentials, even though this will be short-lived because of current restrictions on how much these individuals can work before jeopardizing their pension.
- Again- MAASE strongly urges support for HB 4059 to allow the use of post-2010 school retirees in areas of Critical Shortage to support our children with IEPs.

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