MICHIGAN COALITION FOR HIGH STUDENT STANDARDS

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in opposition to Senate Bill 826.

In addition to speaking to the views of each of our respective organizations, we are also testifying on behalf of the Michigan Coalition for High Student Standards. This coalition is a statewide partnership of education and business leaders, parents, teachers, principals and military families, committed to maintaining clear and rigorous academic standards for all Michigan students.

The ultimate goal of our K-12 education system is to prepare our students to succeed after high school graduation – no matter what their future holds. We oppose Senate Bill 826 because it would be detrimental to Michigan students and undo important progress that we have made in recent years.

Our opposition comes down the three main factors. First, rigorous career- and college-ready academic standards are important for student success. Second, changing academic expectations for students and teachers now would undo recent progress. Finally, students and educators need certainty and consistency – not further change.

Career- and College Ready Academic Standards are important for student success.
Michigan moved to our current academic standards after recognizing that too many of our students did not have the skills and knowledge to succeed after high school. Far too many students graduate, but were unprepared to enter the workforce or begin credit-bearing coursework in training and degree programs.

Our current academic standards were designed to build seamlessly from kindergarten to 12th grade, preparing students to succeed in the next grade, and eventually in career, college and life. Unlike prior standards, they focus on real-world skills like critical thinking, problem solving and deep comprehension, rather than simple memorization.

Changing standards now would undo recent progress.
The shift from our old standards to our current standards was not easy and did not happen overnight. Our teachers have been asked to teach at much higher levels, and our student have had to learn at higher levels. Countless hours have been spent by teachers and districts preparing for this shift, implementing higher standards and developing standards-aligned curriculum.

All of this effort has paid off as students are graduating better prepared to succeed in their path after high school. Over the next several years, we expect this progress to accelerate.

Students and educators need certainty and consistency.

Finally, over the past several years, there has been tremendous change within Michigan education, including the challenging work of implementing much more rigorous academic standards. While these changes have been difficult for our school and teachers, they have been absolutely necessary for preparing our students to succeed in the next grade, and eventually in careers, college and life.

Michigan educators and students have stepped up to this challenge and we are beginning to see these efforts pay off. Now, students and educators need consistency and time to meet – and exceed – our higher expectations.

Unfortunately, this legislation would stall the progress that has been made over the past several years and add volatility and uncertainty for our students, educators and families. As a result, we are strongly opposed to this legislation.

Our broad and diverse coalition recognizes the importance of having clear and rigorous academic standards that help students build toward future success. We are making important progress and need to continue doing so. For the reasons discussed today, we are opposed to Senate Bill 826.

Thank you for your time.