

February 16, 2016

Testimony on Senate Bills 710-711

Thank you Mr. Chairman and committee members for allowing me to testify today.

My name is Jennifer Smith and I am the Director of Government Relations for the Michigan Association of School Boards.

MASB appreciates the work of Sen. Hansen on these bills and his willingness to continue the conversations.

We fully support the quick return of Detroit Schools to an elected board. This puts the schools, students and their future back under local control. As MASB, we stand ready to support the new board with training and assistance as desired or needed.

During previous testimony it was suggested that the interim appointed board could be avoided by doing the first election of the board in the August election. We support this idea as it gives immediate buy-in to the new elected board by having them in place before the school year starts and allowing them to hire the superintendent. It would also give them a stake in the original contract for the superintendent, as under this bill the contract could not be changed without approval from the Financial Review Commission.

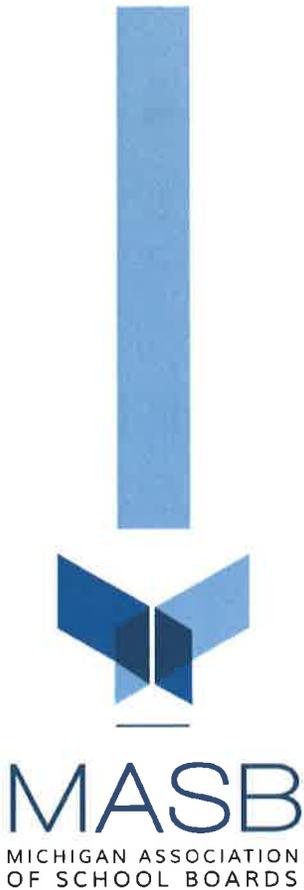
Also, SB710 gives strict criteria for what a superintendent choice should be based on. We feel this should not be prescriptive but allow a local board, through staff and community input, to determine the criteria for a superintendent and make the best choice for a district.

While we understand the desire and need to have the Financial Review Commission oversee the new district initially, we are hopeful that a new district that is starting without a deficit will be able to fulfill the requirements of the FRC and be released from oversight as soon as the current law allows. We hope that the state and FRC would assist with that goal.

We appreciate the conversations about finding alternative sources, outside of the School Aid Fund, of funding for the annual payment to the old school district. This is important to our members as they believe in helping Detroit become a strong district again, but worry about the financial effect on districts throughout the state.

Finally, our members believe strongly in the need for the Detroit Education Commission or something similar. The design behind this commission is a necessary thing for the success of a new district. The commission would control the opening and closing of all school buildings throughout the district.

This accomplishes 2 things; First it eliminates the education deserts we have in parts of Detroit and second gives stability to the pupil population. That stability in pupil count is a big factor in budgeting for districts. Loss of students is not just an issue in the Detroit; it's a problem for districts across the state. But with a district the size of Detroit, if you can't give some stability to the student population, the new board will



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face many of the same budgeting issues as the previous board and will find it difficult to succeed.

Again, I appreciate your consideration of our concerns and look forward to continuing to work with Sen. Hansen and this committee to come to a package of bills to benefit all our schools.

I'd be willing to take any questions.