



MICHIGAN SENATE

Appropriations Requests for Legislatively Directed Spending Items

Date Submitted: 04/14/2026

1. Sponsoring legislator's full name:

Senator Erika Geiss

2. Cosponsoring legislators' names (if applicable):

Rick Outman

3. Intended legislatively directed spending item recipient:

Montcalm Community College

4. Physical address of legislatively directed spending item recipient and the intended location of the project or activity:

2800 College Dr. Sidney, MI 48885

5. The recipient's employer identification number:

38-1790920

6. Requested amount of the legislatively directed spending item:

\$1,800,000.00

7. What is the purpose and how does the legislatively directed spending item provide a public benefit that is an appropriate use of taxpayer money?

This initiative establishes a workforce readiness program to develop career-ready talent aligned to Michigan's most critical labor shortages. By providing a skills-based curriculum, students build technical competencies in high-demand fields such as computer science, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, and software development through an academic esports program that enables learners to earn industry-based certifications. The program also embeds structured, paid internship experiences, creating a direct and scalable pipeline from K-12 education into Michigan's workforce. To support statewide implementation, Montcalm Community College is requesting an appropriation of \$1.8M to establish a competitive grant enabling Michigan schools to participate in this workforce development model. This proposal delivers a clear public benefit by establishing a scalable workforce development

model that leverages Michigan's existing esports infrastructure to address talent shortages in high-demand technology sectors. By converting high levels of student engagement into measurable workforce outcomes, including industry-recognized certifications, technical skill attainment, and paid internship experiences, the program will ensure that public funds directly support career readiness, economic mobility, and employer-aligned skill development. Students develop in-demand competencies, build portfolios of applied work, and gain experience with real-world tools and workflows used across multiple industries. The proposed grant program would be open to school districts statewide and would fund 120 high schools to implement this workforce-aligned model. Each school would receive:

- Career pathway curriculum licenses aligned to industry-recognized certifications
- Structured portfolio development frameworks tied directly to workforce readiness
- 100 hours of paid internship programming per school
- Statewide esports league participation and competition infrastructure
- Educator professional development and ongoing program support

Students participate in project-based learning across disciplines such as programming, digital production, IT systems, and interactive technologies. This approach ensures that publicly funded instruction is directly tied to workforce needs, equipping students with practical, transferable skills aligned to current and emerging job markets. In addition to technical training, students develop essential workplace competencies such as collaboration, communication, and adaptability inside the work they do on competitive esports teams. These skills are embedded within the program to strengthen employability, while the primary focus remains on delivering accountable, outcomes-based workforce results through certifications, technical training, and internship participation. Across 120 high schools, this investment generates 12,000 total paid internship hours statewide during the 2026–2027 school year, providing students with early workforce exposure while strengthening Michigan's long-term talent pipeline. Additionally, the program supports early pipeline development through 80 middle schools, providing:

- Curriculum licenses focused on digital literacy and foundational technical skills
- Structured exposure through esports competition to high school certification and career pathways
- Educator professional development and onboarding
- Academic esports league participation and statewide competition access
- Ongoing technical support and implementation services

Montcalm Community College, serving as the fiduciary for the grant, would ensure responsible stewardship of taxpayer dollars through statewide coordination, oversight, stakeholder engagement, higher education alignment, and performance reporting tied to workforce and economic development outcomes. Montcalm Community College would also host a statewide esports championship event, bringing students, educators, and families to campus. This event connects student engagement with postsecondary and career exploration, including exposure to academic programs and workforce pathways in technology and related fields. Esports serves as a proven engagement driver that increases participation, attendance, and retention, particularly among students not traditionally reached by other programs. When aligned with structured workforce pathways, it becomes an effective tool for expanding access to career-connected learning at scale. With numerous colleges across the state offering esports programs and scholarships, this will provide a bridge from K–12 into postsecondary education and

high-growth careers. This investment represents an appropriate and strategic use of taxpayer funds by expanding access to workforce-aligned education, strengthening Michigan's talent pipeline, and supporting long-term economic competitiveness in a technology-driven economy.

- 8. Has the legislatively directed spending item previously received or been awarded any of the following types of funding in the past 5 years? If so, how much? Check all that apply:**

N/A

Amount

N/A

- 9. Estimated time frame for completion of the legislatively directed spending item project:**

Grants to be awarded in time for start of 2027-2028 school year.

- 10. Is the recipient a nonprofit corporation?**

Yes

Additional Information for Nonprofit Corporations (if applicable)

The answer to questions 1 to 3 must be "Yes" for the nonprofit corporation to qualify for a legislatively directed spending item.

- 1. Has the nonprofit corporation continuously operated in this state for the preceding 36 months?**

Yes

- 2. Has the nonprofit corporation had a physical office in this state for not less than the preceding 12 consecutive months?**

Yes

- 3. Does the organization have a board of directors?**

Yes

- 4. List all of the officers and active members on the board of directors:**

Montcalm Community College Board of Trustees: -Kurt Peterson, Chair -Carol Deuling-Ravell, Vice Chair -Dr. Esther Combs, Secretary -Joshua Stump, Treasurer -Joyce Kitchenmaster -Robert Marston -Robert Byram -Shelly Springborn, Assistant Secretary -Theresa Rowland, Assistant Treasurer

Certification By Sponsoring Legislator

"I certify that my immediate family members, legislative staff members, and I have no direct or indirect pecuniary interest in the requested legislatively directed spending item."

"I certify that the intended recipient of this legislatively directed spending item is not a for-profit entity."

*"I certify that the information in this form is true to the best of my knowledge."
Senator Erika Geiss*