



September 6, 2018

The Honorable Tim Kelly  
Chairman, House Education Committee  
Anderson House Office Building  
Lansing, MI 48933

Dear Representative Kelly:

Business leaders in Michigan have never been more aligned in our focus on the talent pipeline. From Pre-K through career, reforming our education systems is a top priority, and we share a vision and a commitment to all reforms being focused on one thing: student success. Our vision is for a student-focused system, with smart and best-in-class tools in the classroom, building, school district, and state that are all geared towards increasing outcomes and opportunity for students. A sound educator evaluation tool is among the tools necessary to build and maintain this student-centered system. **We oppose the changes proposed in HB 5707, which would send Michigan back in time and away from our goal.**

This year Michigan ranked 49th in the country for third grade reading scores. Many students across the state, from all socio-economic backgrounds, continue to fall short of basic proficiency standards in all grades and subjects. Regardless of these problems with student outcomes, school administrators consistently evaluate their teachers as high quality, with very few exceptions. In the six school years from 2011-2017, 98 percent of teacher evaluations found the instructor as either “highly effective” (36%) or “effective” (62%).

A quality teacher evaluation tool is one of the most sophisticated and powerful tools a school district has for not only accountability, but to catalyze change. A quality evaluation is a diagnostic test that allows districts and administrators to provide targeted implementation of teacher training, re-training, professional development, mentorship, and most importantly support to teachers early in their career, or with gaps in their skillsets. Best practices from around the country suggest that these tools should aim to be as objective and student focused as possible, and this legislation would undermine that goal.

If our organizations were collectively advocating for a change in the amount of the evaluation tool that is attributed to student’s growth, it would most certainly not be a decrease. Student growth is one of the most objective measures used to assess exactly how effective a teacher is at instruction. It is important to note, teachers are not treated punitively for the disadvantages their students walk into their classroom carrying when measuring the growth of their students. Instead, growth measures look at precisely what happened during that year, within that very classroom. While teachers wear many hats, and have many jobs, it is undoubtedly student instruction, a teacher’s ability to transfer content and catalyze learning, that is **the** most important indicator of their success and performance in the classroom.

Our state needs to do better for our students. House Bill 5707 is a step away from a student- centered classroom and a student-focused Michigan. On behalf of our collective members and organizations, we urge you to oppose this legislation.

Sincerely,

Doug Rothwell  
President and CEO  
Business Leaders for Michigan

Sandy Baruah  
President and CEO  
Detroit Regional Chamber

Rick Baker  
President and CEO  
Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce

CC: Members of the House Education Committee