



January 27, 2022

Dear Senate Education Appropriations Committee,

As leaders and active members of our communities across the state of Michigan, we are committed to **keeping students safe and ensuring our schools are fully funded** so that they have the resources to meet the mental health needs of students and staff. We are calling on you to **invest 100 million dollars in counselors, social workers and psychologists for our schools.**

For too long, Michigan's youth and youth across the nation have felt unsafe - both mentally and physically - going to school. Our students, educators, administrators and families in Michigan go to schools that are at least \$4 billion underfunded annually. They've had to endure schools with not enough teachers, counselors, nurses or support staff. They've had to endure a pandemic that has only added to the stress and anxiety they feel. They've had to endure countless school shooter drills and watch peers across the country and at home die in their schools.

The Michigan Department of Education states that studies have shown a direct correlation between school removals and an increase in dropout, juvenile justice involvement, criminal behavior and incarceration. **The American School Counselor Association recommends that schools maintain a ratio of 250 students per school counselor. However, Michigan has one of the worst ratios in the country of 1 counselor to 671 students.**

The challenges and trauma that Michigan families have faced in the last few years since COVID-19 cannot be ignored. Our students need mental health supports so we can avoid school shootings like the tragedy at Oxford High School.

We urge you to invest 100 million dollars in the mental health services and supports within our schools. Mental health services in schools have been underfunded for far too long and the need

only continues to grow. The trauma so many families have faced due to Covid-19 and so many other challenges have reached a level that can no longer be ignored. Our children and families need mental health supports so that we can avoid tragic school shootings like the one at Oxford High School.

Sincerely,

Angela Reyes, Director, Detroit Hispanic Development Corporation

Kimberly Johnson, Director, Developing Kids

Trina Tocco, Director, Michigan Education Justice Coalition

Molly Sweeney & Wytrice Harris, Co-Directors, 482Forward

David Hecker, President, American Federation of Teachers-Michigan

Sirrita Darby, Director, Detroit Heals Detroit

Shakti Rambarran, Advocacy Director, Michigan Organization on Adolescent Sexual Health

Ken Whittaker, Executive Director, Michigan United and Michigan People's Campaign

Peri Stone-Palmquist, Executive Director, Student Advocacy Center

Autumn Butler & Kermit Williams, Co-Founders, Oakland Forward

Kelsey Wiley, Organizer, MiStudentsDream

Laura Misumi, Executive Director, Rising Voices

Krystina Wilson, Lead Organizer, NorthEast Action Team

Dessa Cosma, Executive Director, Detroit Disability Power

Black Women's Roundtable

Michigan Coalition on Black Civic Participation

Frances Vicioso & Emily Olivares, Co-Directors, Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation

Kalamazoo

Jennifer Heymoss, Vice President of Initiatives and Public Policy, Kalamazoo Community Foundation