MICHIGAN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

300 N. WASHINGTON SQ.
LANSING, MI 48913

CUSTOMER
CONTACT CENTER
517 373 9808

WWW.MICHIGAN.ORG

December 12, 2005

Mr. Mike Flanagan
State Superintendent of Public Instruction
Post Office Box 30008
Lansing, Michigan 48909

Dear Superintendent Flanagan:

At a meeting of the Michigan Economic Development Corporation Executive Committee last Thursday, the members unanimously agreed to support the high school graduation requirement recommendations that you presented to the State Board of Education on November 15, 2005. We understand the State Board of Education is scheduled to take formal action on these recommendations at its meeting tomorrow.

There is growing concern over the quality of Michigan high school students' education and their inadequate preparation for postsecondary education and work place success. Michigan is the home of eighty-five percent of the automotive research and development performed in North America. This represents thousands of jobs that require a high level of education. In addition, the recent passage of the 21st Century Jobs Fund, which is expected to diversify and grow our high-tech economy, will create jobs that also require a high level of education. Michigan's lack of high school graduates with 21st century math, science, and technical-focused skills will certainly be one of the greatest challenges we face in competing in today's global economy.

Current statutory requirements are not adequate to provide our students with the 21st century skills they will need to thrive both professionally and personally. The Michigan Merit Curriculum is a responsible proposal that respects the need for local control, while giving our children access to a foundation curriculum that will better prepare them for successful futures. They also speak to Michigan's need to align standards and benchmarks across the state at the high school level.

We agree with you that the need to improve Michigan high schools is urgent and we cannot wait five or ten years. We must begin today. We encourage the State Board of Education to adopt your recommendations on Tuesday, and the Michigan Legislature to pass and enact legislation by March 1, 2006, in time for the Michigan Merit Curriculum to begin with next year's freshman class.

Sincerely,

Matthew P. Cullen
Chair
MEDC Executive Committee

Philip H. Power
Vice Chair
MEDC Executive Committee

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