

Grand Rapids Press Conference
Union High School
Thursday, May 5, 2022

Good afternoon. It's a pleasure to be here to lift up students, teachers, and a budget that supports students and staff.

When I was young, I had many TERRIFIC teachers, teachers who encouraged, inspired, and helped make me into a life-long learner, teacher, coach, mentor, and superintendent.

In spite of the significant challenges that exist today, teachers still have the BEST opportunity of any career of which I am aware to pour into and have a positive effect on children.

Last week was Student Appreciation Week.

This is Teacher Appreciation Week.

We appreciate BEST our students and teachers by providing the needed funding and supports for them. There is no better way to share our appreciation.

I am here to honor teachers. I just spent time with a group of Union High School teachers, support staff, and administrators who deserve our praise.

Yesterday, I was in Escanaba to announce first-grade teacher Nanette Hanson as the next Michigan Teacher of the Year. She represents all of the great teachers that we have in every part of Michigan – from the U.P. to the Indiana border, from one Great Lake to another. She and her colleagues do extraordinary things for our children every day.

An added bonus is the recognition that Nanette Hanson's daughter is studying to become a teacher! Now THAT's a family-plan, grow-your-own program!

Governor Whitmer's budget is a generational budget that lifts up Michigan students and staff. Her budget:

- Would increase the per pupil foundation allowance by 5% or \$435 per child
- Would raise categorical funding for economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, English learners, students in rural and isolated districts, and students in career and technical education
- Would increase school safety funding
- Would provide for a \$1 billion infrastructure modernization fund
- Would add \$361 million in children's mental health funding
- Would include \$2.3 billion for teacher recruitment and staff retention

It is the BEST school budget that many educators have ever seen and has the potential – if adopted in substantially similar form – to drive significant improvement in our children's education.

The Senate and House budgets are more obviously works in progress. Both have strengths; both have gaps.

- Like the governor's budget, both the Senate and House budgets include significant and appreciated per pupil foundation allowance increases.
- All three budgets include needed investments in school safety.
- Relative to categorical funding, several studies in the last seven years have said the same thing: different children have different needs; different needs have different costs; and we have underfunded children's educational needs in Michigan.
- We call these different need areas categorical funding. Only the governor's budget includes increases in five distinct and important categorical funding areas: economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, English learners, CTE students, and students in rural/isolated districts. While both the Senate and House budgets increase funding for students in rural and isolated districts, the Senate fails to increase funding for economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, English learners, and CTE students, while the House fails to increase funding for economically disadvantaged students and English learners. The School Finance Research Collaborative notes the importance of ALL of these categorical funding areas in an adequate and equitable school funding system.
- Neither the Senate nor House budget includes any funding for the infrastructure modernization fund. Some districts simply don't have the tax

base to afford a bond or a sinking fund. The infrastructure modernization fund would help these poorer tax base districts, often rural. This is a matter of equity as well.

- Neither the House* nor the Senate substantially increases children's mental health, a very important area before the pandemic, let alone now, in the recovery from the challenges of the last two years and in the wake of Oxford. It wasn't until the summer of 2018 that the first funding for children's mental health in the state school aid act was provided--\$30 million. Last year, the governor and the legislature negotiated an additional, non-recurring appropriation of \$240 million to provide more nurses, social workers, guidance counselors, and school psychologists. We need to continue to build important mental health supports for our children. Now is the time to go BOLD on children's mental health and work to create schools that fully meet our children's mental and physical health--as well as academic--needs.
- Finally, we appreciate that both the Senate and House provided some funding for teacher recruitment. The House particularly leaned into grow your own programs for support staff and students to become teachers, as well as fellowships or scholarships for students currently studying to become teachers, in addition to student teacher stipends. This is a good start. That said, neither the Senate nor the House made significant investments in retention and neither funded staff retention bonuses, which the governor recognized as an important mechanism for stabilizing the profession at this critical juncture.

Michigan needs a K-12 school aid budget that focuses on the unique needs and costs of ALL students, strengthens the teaching profession, and provides better supports for students and staff.

The governor's proposed budget does just that, and the state legislature needs to craft a budget with similar focus.

The Senate and House are making progress in their budget work. They would do well to review again the governor's budget in the aforementioned areas, a budget that fully supports students and staff.

We have the resources and the opportunity in the state RIGHT NOW to make a significant difference for our children. Such an opportunity will likely not exist in the foreseeable future. Let's make the most of the moment...and do something LIFE-CHANGING for the next generation of Michigan children. Thank you.

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**NOTE: In the afternoon of May 5, 2022, the House of Representatives, given earlier feedback from MDE and others about the absence of mental health funding increases in House appropriations subcommittee and committee budgets, amended and passed its K-12 budget that includes over \$100 million in additional funding to support student mental health needs.*