



**Testimony Presented to the  
House and Senate Appropriations Subcommittees for Community Colleges  
Part-Time Independent Student Grant**

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Good afternoon, Chairmen Booher and Afendoulis and members of the Community Colleges Appropriations Subcommittees. I am Peter Ruark, Senior Policy Analyst with the Michigan League for Public Policy. The League advocates for policies that help individuals and families in Michigan who are low income become economically self-sufficient.

**The Michigan League for Public Policy urges you to support funding for the reinstatement of the Part-Time Independent Student Grant, which assists older students, in the proposed Fiscal Year 2018 budget.** Funding for this grant was eliminated in 2010, leaving individuals who have been out of high school for 10 years with no financial aid to use at a community college or public university. After several years without this grant, the governor has included \$2 million in the Community Colleges budget for Fiscal Year 2018, to be used only at community colleges.

Reinstating the Part-Time Independent Student Grant is important for individuals and for the workforce as a whole. For decades, many Michigan residents were able to become employed in the manufacturing sector immediately after high school, acquire valuable skills on the job, earn a livable wage and benefits with which to support their families, and retire with a pension. Today, however, to be hired in a career-track job, most workers are expected to already possess occupational skills and a credential, such as a degree, license or certificate attained at a community college.

Many workers decide more than 10 years after high school to get a postsecondary credential in order to regain employment after a layoff or to move out of low-paying work. While state financial aid helps many students of traditional college age (18-24), there are no state grants to help students attend community colleges if they have been out of high school for more than 10 years. Of the three existing grant programs, the Tuition Incentive Program and the Michigan Competitive Scholarship explicitly exclude such individuals from eligibility, and the Michigan Tuition Grant is available only to those attending a private, not-for-profit institution.

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In addition, none of the three current grant programs are available to students enrolled less than half time or who are in short-term occupational programs. Older students must often go less than half time or enroll in a short-term program due to work and family needs. Not having financial aid for less than half time may lead some students to take on more classes than they can handle and jeopardize their ability to succeed.

The Michigan League for Public Policy urges you to support at least \$2 million in funding for the Part-Time Independent Student Grant back into the budget. This would help workers get higher-skill jobs and would help employers find the skilled workers that they need, both of which are keys to a vibrant economy.

I will be happy to answer any questions.