

Opposition to Senate Bill 359

Michigan law requires job performance to serve as the primary factor in determining compensation for teachers and administrators hired by a Community District after 2019. This salary structure rewards and increases the retention of high performing teachers and provides incentive for all teachers to improve their professional practice. Removing job performance as the primary compensation determinant would likely decrease teacher quality and, in turn, student achievement.

Exposing students to high performing teachers is the best way for schools to improve student achievement. With Michigan's students lagging behind the national average in English language arts and math achievement, the state must take measures to staff its schools with high quality teachers that can reverse this trend. These measures should include compensating teachers based on their level of effectiveness in the classroom.

Teacher effectiveness is not determined by length of service or seniority. Instead, it is determined by the teacher's impact on student growth over time and application of best practices in the classroom. These indicators of teacher quality are measured via an annual evaluation that incorporates data from student assessments and classroom observations. The evaluation system identifies areas of strength and recommends performance improvement initiatives. Tying the annual evaluation to compensation provides added incentive to improve the teacher's performance.

High performing teachers should be eligible for higher pay regardless of their length of service. By compensating teachers based on their level of effectiveness, schools are more likely to recruit and retain quality teachers whether they are in their first or tenth year of service. In turn, with more high performing teachers on staff, schools will provide a learning environment that supports greater student achievement.

The solution to address the more rigorous salary structure for staff hired by a Community District after 2019 is not to make it easier for ineffective teachers to remain in the classroom. Removing the requirement to base compensation primarily on job performance will disincentivize educators to improve their effectiveness. Instead, job performance should serve as the primary determining factor for educator compensation across the state so that all Michigan students receive the highest quality of education possible. As a result, students are more likely to be exposed to a level of instruction that promotes their academic success.

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