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Representative Tim Kelly, Chair  
K-12 School Aid Subcommittee  
Michigan House of Representatives

Dear Chairman Kelly and Members of the K-12 School Aid Subcommittee,

I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony regarding the critical role of cyber schools in Michigan's educational landscape and the funding considerations necessary to ensure that we continue serving our students effectively. Michigan International Prep School (MIPS) is a tuition-free, online public school chartered by Ovid-Elsie Area Schools. As one of Michigan's cyber schools, we serve a diverse student population of over 1,700 students across 76 Michigan counties and in 71% of the state's school districts. More than 75% of our students are classified as at-risk, highlighting the crucial role we play in providing equitable access to education for students facing significant challenges.

While our model differs from that of traditional brick-and-mortar public schools, our costs are not less - rather, they are different. We invest heavily in digital infrastructure and unique opportunities, including technology, online curriculum development, one-on-one student support, cyber security measures, learning labs, personalized learning resources, a robust whole child mentoring program, a school of the arts, in-person state testing, shipping materials, etc. Additionally, while students primarily learn from home, we maintain physical learning labs where students receive in-person support and engage in collaborative learning. Our current drop-in learning labs are located in Detroit, Davison, and Saginaw, as well as in all of our hockey partner facilities, with our newest location set to open soon in Mt. Pleasant.

Unlike traditional public schools, we do not have access to funding through bonds, sinking funds, or millages. Our operational funding is solely based on per-pupil allocations. Given the unique needs of our students and the alternative educational structure we provide, cyber schools must receive adequate and equitable funding to continue fulfilling our mission.

We respectfully ask that this committee recognize the distinct financial landscape of cyber schools and work to ensure that our students receive the support and resources they need to succeed. We appreciate your time and consideration of our testimony and welcome any further discussions on how we can best serve Michigan's students together.

Sincerely,

Amy Dunlap  
Michigan International Prep School