



April 2, 2018

The Honorable Darwin Booher  
Michigan Senate  
P.O. Box 30036  
Lansing, MI 48909

Dear Senator Booher:

**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 2019 budget.** Funding for this grant was eliminated in 2010, leaving individuals who have been out of high school for 10 years or more with no financial aid to use at a community college or public university.

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.

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 to put 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.

Thank you, and please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Gilda'.

Gilda Z. Jacobs  
President and CEO