

This Is Not OK!

Dear Governor Whitmer:

Please stop using our students as pawns in political gamesmanship! While five is a relatively small number of school districts to negatively impact, we are no less important than any other Michigan school district. Your calculation that by singling out small, rural school children's education as a means of getting the other side's attention you won't be hurting your own base is a flawed concept. Michigan voters will remember, and we will remind them, that you were willing to tamper with the public education of children in geographically isolated areas of your state to further your own political strategies.

Our schools are truly the center of our communities. This manufactured uncertainty has caused many of our families to consider moving. The loss of these funds will require budget cutting to the point that maintaining a high school program will not be possible. Incidentally, the very existence of the funds you removed was to allow our schools to be able to provide highly qualified teachers to teach the mandated Michigan curriculum. To be clear, we are not writing to seek "another government handout" as some have claimed. In fact, our communities send hundreds of thousands more in property tax dollars to Lansing than we receive for education through Section 22d or any other educational funding. Your actions have spurred a lack of trust in our state government.

DeTour Area Public Schools superintendent, Robert Vaught said, "It's devastating to our district and the future for our students." In Whitefish Township, the very district after which the original "Saving Paradise" legislation was named, Superintendent Tom McKee stated, "My 53 tremendous students up here in Whitefish are the political football that is being kicked back and forth between the parties right now and that's not OK."

We have met with Speaker Chatfield to communicate these same concerns for our children's futures. Please consider this letter an open invitation to come to any of our five schools to understand the impact on our communities, explain why you feel our children's educational programming is fair game, and, perhaps more importantly, how you intend to remedy the situation. Our children are just as important as your children. We suspect you would respond differently if the impact was felt in your house.

We remain eager to see a speedy resolution.

Thank you.

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