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MASA, MAISA, MASB, MASSP: Students shouldn't suffer in order to fix Michigan roads

Devastating raid on education dollars continues in proposal eliminating sales tax on gas

LANSING—The House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation approved a budget today that would eliminate the sales tax on gasoline over two years, resulting in a cut to schools of more than \$700 million. Additionally, the House School Aid Budget removes higher education funding from the School Aid Fund, but doesn't reattribute those dollars to K-12 education.

Education leaders from the Michigan Association of Superintendents and Administrators, the Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators, the Michigan Association of School Boards and Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals agree there needs to be a comprehensive infrastructure plan, however, it shouldn't come in the form of massive cuts to Michigan schools.

This proposal is neither new nor the first raid on School Aid Fund dollars to be put toward the state's infrastructure. Last year, in the final days of session, the Legislature approved a plan to reduce the amount of income tax revenue that went to the School Aid Fund by \$170 million and redirect that money to roads.

"If universities are removed from the School Aid Fund, that \$500 million should be used in our schools," said Don Wotruba, CAE, MASB Executive Director. "At the end of last year, the Legislature took school aid revenue for roads and now they're taking sales tax. Instead of pulling School Aid Fund money, the House needs to find another source to fix the roads."

Nearly 75% of the money raised through the sales tax on gas is earmarked for schools. This proposal would eliminate that—forcing devastating cuts to public education in Michigan.

“We were disheartened to see the road plan forming in the House redirects hundreds of millions of dollars in sales tax revenue from education to fill potholes,” said Chris Wigent, MASA Executive Director. “We understand the need for a comprehensive roads solution, but it should not come on the backs of Michigan’s schoolchildren.”

MASB, MAISA, MASA and MASSP all support a comprehensive roads and infrastructure plan, but it cannot be at the continued expense of public education. Improved infrastructure will be worth very little if Michigan’s school system suffers to the point no one wants to live in Michigan, let alone use the roads.

“The House’s proposed solution does not fix the problem of underfunded schools and crumbling roads,” said William Miller, Ph.D., MAISA Executive Director. “The House’s proposed budget is simply another shell game that doesn’t address the root problem. We need more revenue and urge the Legislature to look to the Governor’s proposal. We no longer want the budget balanced to the detriment of Michigan’s schoolchildren.”

All of these education organizations support the budget proposed by Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, which draws on the recommendations from the School Finance Research Collaborative.

Wendy Zdeb, Executive Director of MASSP, added, “The House budget represents a missed opportunity to adopt a research-based school funding model that serves the unique needs of all students. Instead, Michigan’s students are once again being asked to accept a less than equitable budget while also footing the bill for road repairs. MASSP strongly urges the Legislature to support Gov. Whitmer’s school funding plan, which provides students with the individual supports they need to meet Michigan’s academic standards.”

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