



## *Press Release*

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### **MDE Opposes Senate Bills to Retain 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Students Next Year**

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LANSING – The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) strongly opposes legislation that was adopted today by the Senate Education and Career Readiness Committee to push the state’s mandatory third grade retention requirement to next year due to the pandemic, but penalize both third and fourth grade students in the 2021-2022 school year.

As required by the state’s Read By Grade Three law, third grade students who score 1252 or below on the English language arts (ELA) M-STEP are identified for retention in third grade. MDE and the State Board of Education consistently opposed the retention component of the law.

“Third grade retentions are bad public policy, and even more so if expanding to students in two grades,” said State Superintendent Dr. Michael Rice. “Local school districts need to work carefully with families to focus on reading supports and minimize retentions and the resultant adverse impact to children.”

Senate Bill 265 was amended by the Senate committee today to add fourth grade students to the retention penalty next school year. The bill was reported from committee on a 4-2 party line vote and sent to the full Senate for consideration.

“Doubling down on bad policy is not the answer,” said Dr. Michael Rice. “Instead, to improve early literacy, the legislature should fund early childhood education for all eligible children in the state, smaller early elementary class sizes, one-on-one tutors for children in need, and diverse classroom reading materials for early elementary students.”

State Board of Education President Dr. Casandra Ulbrich added, “I appreciate the apparent acknowledgement by the Senate committee members that the third grade reading bill is flawed, especially in a pandemic, but expanding it is clearly not the answer. It’s time to throw in the towel on this bad public policy. A standardized test should never be used to determine the trajectory of a child’s education and punishing children is an ineffective method of getting them to fill in the right bubble on a test.”

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