



To: Members of the House Committee on Ways & Means

From: Associated Builders and Contractors of Michigan, Detroit Regional Chamber, Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce, Home Builders Association of Michigan, Lansing Regional Chamber, Michigan Chamber of Commerce, Michigan Chemistry Council, Michigan Farm Bureau, Michigan Infrastructure & Transportation Association, Michigan Manufacturers Association, Michigan Restaurant Association, NFIB/Michigan, Small Business Association of Michigan

Date: May 23, 2019

RE: **SUPPORT 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills Credits**

Our organizations represent a wide array of Michigan job-providers, but we have one thing in common: talent is a top priority for our members. Michigan businesses need world-class talent to compete in a global economy. Our members, small and large, are dedicated to policies that develop a strong and diverse talent system and provide learning opportunities with employer engagement to prepare students to succeed.

According to the Michigan Bureau of Labor Market Information and the Workforce Intelligence Network, Michigan will have over 811,000 high-demand career openings through 2024. Further, as the large Baby Boomer generation retires, they take their skills with them, leaving not only empty jobs, but a skill deficit.

To address the talent shortage, we must increase student awareness of rewarding and lucrative career opportunities and allow Michigan students to develop skills at a younger age that can carry them into the workforce and give them a competitive advantage when choosing a career path.

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills Credit proposal included within House Bills 4269, 4271 and HB 4282 provide students and families greater flexibility to invest in subject areas they choose, which could include the skilled trades, computer science and coding, foreign language and visual, performing or applied arts.

Our organizations and our respective memberships believe that Michigan's education system

should allow for multiple pathways to a fulfilling career. Flexibility is key in providing students an opportunity to enroll in courses that will provide them with the skills and training needed to access high-paying jobs. We support legislative efforts to ensure that the Michigan Merit Curriculum is rigorous, yet flexible to allow students to pursue the path of their choice.

Unfortunately, an amendment was adopted to HB 4282 by the House Education Committee that would have the unintended consequences of adding more graduation requirements for students entering kindergarten in 2020 and undermining the intent of establishing the flexibility of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills Credit option. We ask that the committee consider striking the changes made to HB 4282 (H-2) section 2 that would add an additional foreign language credit to the Michigan Merit Curriculum requirements.

The talent gap is a clear barrier to growth in Michigan and solutions to these challenges will create opportunities for our next generation to prosper right here in Michigan. To provide students with increased educational options as they position themselves to join the workforce, whether in skilled trade disciplines or jobs requiring undergraduate and graduate degrees, our organizations ask that you support 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills legislation.