

[Date]

House Office Building
P.O. Box 30014
Lansing, MI 48909-7514

Dear [You're Representative]:

In a climate of diminishing resources and inadequate funding, Michigan schools are becoming increasingly more selective in deciding which programs to offer students. This is evidenced by the alarming increase in Michigan's student to school counselor ratio. Although the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) recommended a ratio of 1 school counselor to 250 students to adequately provide programming to address the academic, career, and personal/social developmental needs of students, Michigan currently ranks 47th in the nation with an average K-12 ratio of 1 school counselor to 628 students (ASCA, 2006). In Michigan, most school districts have no elementary counseling program at all, and those that do have a ratio of 1 school counselor to 928 students.

High ratios limit the impact school counseling programs can have on student development and stand in stark contrast to recent empirical evidence that school counseling and developmental guidance services strengthen students' social, emotional, and decision-making skills and also positively impacts their academic achievement, in terms of higher standardized test scores, better grades, and post secondary enrollments. In response to these growing student challenges and to the pressures to implement standards-based educational programs, the Association of Michigan School Counselors and the Michigan School Counselor Association are jointly introducing a bill to amend the School Aid Act of 1979.

The proposed legislation establishes a three year grant for reducing School Counselor Ratios in selected school districts serving at risk student populations. Administered by the Michigan Department of Education, the bill would require awarded districts to submit annual evaluation reports to demonstrate the impact that a lower school counselor to student ratio will have on student achievement, school safety, attendance, discipline, graduation rate, and postsecondary choices. *I am seeking your support on this bill.*

Please accept my best wishes as you begin the new legislative session in "making a difference" for Michigan Citizens.

Sincerely,

[Name)
[Address]