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**To:** Karen Hill <khill@vicksburg.k12.mi.us>  
**Date:** 4/15/2011 10:02 AM  
**Subject:** Fwd: House to Vote Soon on Governor's Proposal

For Board

----- Forwarded message -----

From: "SOS Coalition" <pspadafore@masb.org>  
Date: Apr 13, 2011 2:14 PM  
Subject: House to Vote Soon on Governor's Proposal  
To: <cglaes@vicksburg.k12.mi.us>

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\* April 13, 2011\*

Below is an open letter to the legislature sent by SOS Co-Chairs Tom White and Peter Spadafore. An email version went to all legislators and media outlets.

The governor released a counter-proposal today that would reduce the impact of his proposed tax increase on seniors. This plan would raise \$300 million instead of the \$900 million in the governor's original proposal, a change of \$600 million.

School funding is currently unaffected by this latest development. On the positive side, it's the first sign that the governor is willing to modify his initial position. On the negative side, he may be positioning to push his plan through the legislature with this one change to senior citizens.

It's possible that the House K-12 Subcommittee on Appropriations will vote as early as this week. The only public testimony to the committee so far has been on the governor's proposal, so it's possible that's what they'll be voting on, with the change referenced above. If your district's House member is on the K-12 Subcommittee on Appropriations please contact him/her immediately and encourage him/her to be open minded and consider alternatives that will reduce or eliminate the cuts proposed for schools rather than rubber stamp the governor's approach.

Letter to the Legislature: You Don't Have to Cut Schools

The legislature doesn't HAVE to cut funding to Michigan's K-12 schools! The School Aid Fund has sufficient dollars to provide a \$260 per student increase. That's if the legislature would stick to its own past practice and use School Aid for school districts only rather than approving the governor's proposal that results in a minimum of a \$470 per student cut, plus additional costs of \$230 per student for the state's school employee retirement system.

The governor's proposed budget provides for a huge tax cut for Michigan businesses – totaling \$1.2 billion next year and \$1.7 billion the following year. That would take Michigan from where it is now, an average business tax state, to among the lowest in the country. We believe in giving businesses a reasonable tax cut. However, we object to generating the revenues for the business tax cut by slashing funding to schools and universities, and by increasing taxes on the elderly and poor.

There are alternatives to the governor's proposal. Increasing revenues other than those proposed by the governor seems to be a forbidden topic, but given the devastating alternatives, it deserves consideration. For example, consider extending the sales tax to golf, skiing, tickets for sporting events, the purchase of soft drinks and similar items. Certainly there are some items for which expanding the sales tax makes sense and won't adversely affect the economy. These items alone won't address the funding shortfall, but can be pieces of a solution. Please have the courage to seriously examine these and similar alternatives before slashing spending for education, police and fire services, road repair, health care and more.

Implementing the governor's business tax cuts over a three to five year time span to help reduce the impact should also be considered. Do we need the largest business tax cut in the history of Michigan to be implemented in one year given the many budget issues we're facing? It makes sense to consider implementing it over time. Additionally, given that these tax cuts are intended to help create jobs, we ask that you find a mechanism for holding businesses accountable by tying the cuts directly to job creation.

We understand schools need to make sacrifices and changes. The SOS Coalition, which includes 12,000 school employees and supporters, has embraced a number of highly controversial cost-cutting measures such as pension reform and requiring that all school employees share at least 20 percent of the cost of health insurance. Additionally, schools have been cutting budgets for several years. For the coming year, add the \$470 per pupil cut to additional costs for the retirement system and cuts in categorical programs; many schools will be experiencing a devastating \$1,000 per student loss in spending power in just one year. Through creative alternatives you could take that to zero and still accomplish most of the governor's goals.

We're concerned for students and schools as well as the state. We think there are reasonable alternatives to what the governor is proposing. If you pass the governor's proposed budget as is, we'll likely see an additional 50-100 school districts in deficit above the 43 in deficit this year. Roadwork will be postponed, public safety will be affected, access to health care will be denied and so on. Will all of these things make Michigan a more inviting place for new businesses? We don't think so.

We know you care about Michigan. Please take the time to work through these complex issues with care and thoughtfulness. Look for alternatives that are fair and balanced to meet the interests of all Michiganders. What will be your legacy as a lawmaker?

Thank you,  
Tom White and Peter Spadafore, co-chairs, SOS Coalition, Save Our Students,  
Save Our Schools, Save Our State

Michigan Association of School

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