Dear Senators Emmons, Pavlov, Jones, Casperson, and Johnson,

I’m writing to express my strong support for Senate Bills SB 405-408. This proposed legislation seeks to keep children in school thereby significantly reducing the probability of their entering the juvenile justice system. Nearly half of Michigan’s prisoners have neither a high school diploma nor a GED. Over 70% of them read at less than a 3rd grade level. The annual cost of prisoner incarceration is approaching $40,000 so there is both an economic driving force, and more importantly, a human quality of life consideration in saving these lives.

Truancy, suspensions and expulsions are key variables that need to be addressed to keep children in school. These bills are a giant first step in that direction.

Our work in Midland County and increasingly across the state through the Michigan School-Justice Partnership has demonstrated a strong and clear connection between school attendance, completion, and juvenile delinquency. The better the attendance and completion rates, the lower is the probability of involvement in the justice system. Our motto is “books, not bars; education, not incarceration.”

There is broad bipartisan support for these bills across the state. I strongly endorse these bills and urge your thoughtful consideration and support for their enactment.

Please feel free to contact me if you have questions or if you have any questions about our work in this area.

Very truly yours,

**Richard Dolinski**

**Richard Dolinski**

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