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Michigan Association of State Universities hails proposal for major state scholarship program

The Michigan Association of State Universities today strongly endorsed a major state investment in public university students outlined in a Michigan Senate higher education budget proposal.

The plan, proposed by Sen. Kim LaSata, R-Bainbridge Township, would provide this year's Michigan high school graduates with a \$6,000 annual scholarship for up to four years for those attending a Michigan public or independent, non-profit college or university, and \$3,000 for individuals enrolled at a community college for up to two years. More than three quarters of this year's graduating high school class would be eligible for the scholarship, according to an analysis by the Senate Fiscal Agency. It comes following a long decline in state support for higher education, which has seen per student support at universities decrease by more than 40 percent since 2002, forcing universities to raise tuition to avoid lowering the quality of education in Michigan.

"Michigan is near the bottom among states when it comes to need-based state financial aid for students. This plan—providing \$6,000 per student to nearly 80 percent of students for up to four years of college—would be an important step in creating new opportunity for thousands of students who have been discouraged from pursuing their dreams of higher education due to a decades-long state disinvestment in higher education," said Daniel Hurley, CEO of the Michigan Association of State Universities. "Sen. LaSata's leadership shows dedication to the people of Michigan and demonstrates that the best way to shrink overall government spending is by investing a little more in students now, rather than a lot more in social services later."

The Senate also proposed a three percent one-time increase in support for universities along with a three percent increase in base funding—a solid boost in investment that is welcomed. However, the \$91 million increase in campus operations funding is only a small restoration of the more than \$1 billion (adjusted for inflation) cut from higher education budgets since 2002.

"It is vital that Michigan invest not only in factory jobs, but also in providing the college-educated workforce companies are in desperate need of as they compete in an increasingly knowledge-based economy. We simply cannot continue to lose out on \$100,000 a year jobs provided by the Amazon headquarters, which located in college-grad rich northern Virginia, or at Rivian, which moved its headquarters from metro Detroit to Irvine, California, where 68 percent of residents have a bachelor's degree or more," Hurley said.

“If Michigan is going to be the headquarters of the future mobility industry, we need to make it easier for students to afford college and to be fully prepared for successful careers in management, engineering, software development, finance, design and other fields to meet demand. Helping cover \$24,000 of tuition over four years through the proposed Michigan Achievement Grant Award is an important step in filling a vital need of our business community and ensuring Michigan’s future prosperity,” Hurley said.

The Michigan Association of State Universities serves as the coordinating board for Michigan’s 15 public universities, providing advocacy and fostering policy to maximize the collective value these institutions provide in serving the public interest and the State of Michigan.