News Release Archive

Tough Financial Times Offer Great Opportunity for No Child Left Behind, Says Michigan Business Leaders for Education Excellence

While some advocate that the federal government should slow the implementation of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act because of difficult financial times, the Michigan Business Leaders for Education Excellence (MBLEE) supports full and prompt compliance by the State of Michigan with all requirements of the new federal law.

"In tough financial times, schools, just like any business or organization, must take a good hard look at why they exist and what are the critical steps necessary for fulfilling their primary mission," says Dave Whitwam, CEO and Chairman of the Board for Whirlpool Corporation and Chair of MBLEE. "It may be appropriate for schools to eliminate past practices that no longer produce the kind of academic gains required in NCLB."

According to Whitwam, the centerpiece of NCLB is the teaching of foundational skills in reading and mathematics and ensuring that students are equipped with these skills at an early age. "Fully implemented, NCLB will produce positive results in improved student learning and cost savings in the long run," noted Whitwam.

Whitwam also noted that NCLB is not an un-funded mandate. "The federal government is providing Michigan with new money for implementation. It should be strongly emphasized that these dollars are not to be used to supplant current expenditures and school leaders as well as policy makers should not give in to the temptation to use these dollars for any other purpose than for which they are intended," cautioned Whitwam.

In Michigan, No Child Left Behind:

* Benefits an estimated 1.7 million public school children, 3,606 public schools, and 95,200 teachers.

* Increases federal education funding to more than $1.4 billion to help local schools ensure that no child is left behind -- nearly $173 million more than last year, and a 30.4 percent increase over 2000 levels.

* Increases Title I funding to more than $469.4 million to boost the quality of education for disadvantaged children -- nearly $84 million more than last year, and a 29.1 percent increase over 2000 levels.

* Provides more than $28.4 million in funding for Reading First to ensure that every public school child learns to read at or above grade level by the third grade.

* Requires every classroom to have a highly qualified teacher and provides more than $110 million to train and retain skilled educators.

* Provides an estimated $16.4 million to help ensure safe and drug-free schools.

* Provides an estimated $11.7 million to fund after-school programs for at-risk children.

* Provides more than $10.6 million in funding to help school districts assess how well children are learning and schools are teaching.

* Increases Pell Grant funding to an estimated $258.6 million -- $16.6 million more than last year, and a 24.9 percent increase over 2000 levels to ensure greater access to a college education for deserving students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

"NCLB is not just 'another thing' that schools are being asked to do," noted MBLEE Executive Director Jim Sandy. "It provides a structure and a challenge to schools that will help them strip away costly activities and practices which drain resources and distract schools from completing their central purpose, which is to educate kids."

"Schools have come through a period of unprecedented increases in funding and now have to look back and evaluate if those funds were managed wisely and if children are better served today because more money was invested in the system," Sandy added.

"The Michigan Business Leaders for Education Excellence is opposed to any effort to delay or undermine implementation of this important education reform measure and will continue to work vigorously in assisting those interested in securing the academic future of Michigan's children," Sandy concluded.

SOURCE: Michigan Business Leaders for Education Excellence

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