School Accreditation Report Must Now Be Made Public, Says Michigan Chamber of Commerce

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The Michigan Chamber of Commerce and the Michigan Business Leaders for Education Excellence (MBLEE), a program of the Michigan Chamber Foundation, are calling upon the State Board of Education, Department of Education and the Michigan Legislature to make public the latest school accreditation report.

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"The parents, job providers and other stakeholders, must be informed about the performance of local schools," said Michigan Chamber President & CEO Jim Barrett. "The school accreditation report provides parents and others with the information they need to encourage positive changes in their schools -- and provide the best education possible for our children. Hard earned state and local tax dollars were used to prepare this report. Taxpayers have a right to know the results. This report must now be made public."

"The goal is not to bash schools but to use accurate performance data in order to identify and address the needs of under-performing schools," said Jay VanDenBerg, chair of the MBLEE Working Group. "It is important for everyone interested in a better education system to have an understanding of how well schools are performing. Once they identify current conditions and determine how much work needs to be done, there is a better chance that real improvement will take place."

The State Board of Education and the Superintendent of Public Instruction recently decided to delay the release of the school accreditation report when they realized that close to 900 of Michigan's 3,128 schools were not able to meet minimum standards. To be accredited a school needs to meet several criteria, including having at least one-in-four children pass the math, reading and science portions of the Michigan Education Assessment Program (MEAP) test.

"This standard is extremely low," noted MBLEE Director Jim Sandy. "Now, the education establishment is pushing for even lower standards. How low can we go? If the State Board of Education or lawmakers abandon the current accreditation process, we run the risk of encouraging a 'dumbing down' of Michigan's education system, and that's a proposition we simply can't allow."

"Michigan schools have shown that they can meet a challenge when they know what the goals are," added Sandy. "Backing away from these standards will ultimately hurt children, confuse parents and slow the improvement process."

The Michigan Chamber of Commerce is a statewide business organization representing approximately 7,000 employers, trade associations and local chambers of commerce. The Michigan Chamber of Commerce was established in 1959 to be an advocate for Michigan's job providers in the legislative, political and legal process.

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