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BOOSTING EDUCATION EXCELLENCE
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Historic alliance of diverse organizations comes together to improve Michigan's K-12 education outcomes; focus on student needs, future

Unprecedented group of business, education, labor, philanthropy, and state and community leaders join forces as 'Launch Michigan,' to become a top 10 education state

Lansing, Mich. – A strong, thriving public education system is the cornerstone for helping Michigan's children succeed in school, careers and life as well as building robust communities and an economy that works for everyone. It also must be a top state priority, today said "Launch Michigan," a diverse, never-before assembled group of business, education, labor, philanthropic, and state and community leaders.

Unveiled at the Impression 5 Science Center in the state's capital city, that was the loud and clear message from the unlikely group of allies who have pledged to work together to turn Michigan into a leader in educational excellence with lasting, research-driven strategies that transcend politics and election cycles.

Tim Daman, president and CEO of the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce, noted that the effort was a perfect illustration of the collaboration essential to addressing some of the state's most pressing issues. "From the state capital of Lansing to the far reaches of the Upper Peninsula, a strong K-12 education system that prepares our kids for all that's next is one of the keys to ensuring Michigan's comeback continues and truly ensuring sustained prosperity for all. We are more than committed to supporting this historic effort," Daman said.

For Business Leaders for Michigan, the state's business roundtable comprised of the chairpersons, CEOs, or most senior executives of Michigan's largest companies and universities, this work is essential. "Robust public education is essential for thriving economies, creating opportunities for everyone and for Michigan companies to fulfill their wishes for hiring top homegrown talent," said **BLM President and CEO Doug Rothwell**. "This work is critical to Michigan being a place that we can all live, work, raise a family and call home. BLM is 'all in' to make this vision and effort a reality."

Paula Herbart, president of the Michigan Education Association, representing 140,000 of the state's teachers, education support professionals and higher education employees, said the Great Lakes State's largest public employee union has joined the effort to find shared solutions for our students and state. She was joined at the announcement by David Hecker, president of AFT Michigan, a union representing another 35,000 educators working in K-12 and intermediate school districts, community colleges and universities across the state.

"Education is not a partisan issue," Herbart said. "We are 100 percent committed and proud to be part of this effort to help front-line educators who are experts at teaching and learning provide

answers and inform this partnership about what's needed to help every student learn and succeed, regardless of the zip code they live in."

The group said countless reports and research are clear: Michigan is facing an education crisis and can't afford to get stuck re-defining the problem over and over again. Instead, it's about working and moving forward together to improve the system for every child, every school and our state.

For example, **Oakland Schools Superintendent Wanda Cook-Robinson, representative for the School Finance Research Collaborative and numerous Michigan education management associations**, said that "educators go into this field for one reason and one reason only – to help kids and be part of helping them learn and grow. Too often, education goals and policies shift beneath our feet. We need shared strategies that work, that we can stick with and that shouldn't change depending on who is in office. We are excited to roll up our sleeves and work together to best serve all students."

"I can't think of anything more important for our kids and our state's collective future," said **Rob Fowler, president and CEO of the Small Business Association of Michigan**, which represents 26,000 small businesses of all shapes, sizes and industries across Michigan. "We are stronger together. This unique collaboration will help us find meaningful, shared solutions for addressing K-12 achievement and generating the kind of outcomes that fuel innovative spirits, inspire future entrepreneurs and more – regardless of political affiliations. It's a new day and a new way forward, together."

"We know that the most effective way for our state to boost the short and long-term wellbeing of its people is to invest in improvements in education," said **Amber Arellano, executive director for Education Trust-Midwest**, a leading nonpartisan, data-driven education policy, research and advocacy organization. "This new partnership can make a big difference in advancing the pursuit of educational excellence and equity for all Michigan students, and can be a tremendous resource in 2019 when our state has a new governor and many new state lawmakers."

For **Derek Shinska, chair of the Detroit Economic Club Young Leaders and its Career Readiness Academy**, the need for and timing of Launch Michigan couldn't be better. "The world and jobs are changing fast. It's imperative for Michigan kids everywhere to have the most up-to-date skills and training, and to be able to apply or adapt them. We're excited about this partnership and what it can mean for students and our state's future."

"This collaboration provides a platform for Michigan's philanthropic community to get behind," said **Tonya Allen, president and CEO of the Skillman Foundation**. "If we provide equitable opportunity through our state's education system, we can produce equitable outcomes and a prosperous future for all. To do so, we must put politics aside and work together to effectively serve children in every corner of our state."

Initial areas of agreement and focus include:

1. Supporting educators by leveraging existing research and using a statewide educator survey, among other activities, to guide our work.
2. Supporting shared, statewide, research-driven strategies for delivering effective education to all students and sticking to those strategies beyond politics and election cycles, to determine what really works.

3. Supporting a fair and comprehensive accountability system that includes everyone who influences education—not just teachers.
4. Working together to ensure that resources are available to provide for an equitable, student-centered education system and funding model.
5. Elevating public awareness and inspiring action about the current state of education in Michigan.

Next steps include fleshing out a shared agenda this summer and getting it in front of candidates and elected officials in the fall.

The list of participating organizations is growing. As of June 20, 2018, it includes:

AFT Michigan	Michigan Education Association
Business Leaders for Michigan	Michigan Nonprofit Association
Center for Michigan	Michigan PreK-12 Literacy Commission
Council of Michigan Foundations	Michigan School Business Officials
Detroit Economic Club Young Leaders Board	Michigan’s Children
Detroit Regional Chamber	Middle Cities Education Association
Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce	School Finance Research Collaborative
Grand Valley State Univ. Charter Schools Office	Skillman Foundation
Kent ISD	Small Business Association of Michigan
Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce	Steelcase Foundation
Macomb Intermediate School District	Talent 2025
Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators	Teach for America-Detroit
Michigan Association of Public School Academies	The Education Trust-Midwest
Michigan Association of School Boards	Traverse City Area Chamber of Commerce
Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals	United Way for Southeastern Michigan
Michigan Association of Superintendents & Administrators	Wayne RESA
Michigan College Access Network	
Michigan Department of Education	

Tom Haas, Grand Valley State University
 President & Chair, Governor’s 21st Century
 Education Commission
 Doug Ross, Commissioner, Governor’s 21st
 Century Education Commission

The effort is expected to grow and expand over the next several months. More information can be found online at www.LaunchMichigan.org.

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