

September 12, 2025

The Honorable Gretchen Whitmer
Governor of Michigan
P.O. Box 30013
Lansing, MI 48909

Dear Governor Whitmer,

I am writing on behalf of KConnect, a Kent County-based collective impact network, to express concern and request clarification regarding the FY 2025 Section 27k Teacher Loan Repayment Program (MCL Section 388.1627k). KConnect works with cross-sector partners to strengthen educational outcomes and ensure all are on a pathway to economic mobility, and teacher recruitment and retention is a priority for us and our community.

According to the Michigan Department of Education's information, only 232 educators were approved statewide this year, receiving a total of \$573,600 in loan repayment support. By contrast, 5,055 applicants were denied, despite requesting more than \$13.6 million in relief. This equates to an approval rate of just 4.39% out of 5,287 total applicants.

This is a dramatic shift from last year. As reported by Bridge Michigan, in FY 2024 the state approved 8,460 educators, who collectively received \$16.8 million in loan repayment assistance. The scale of the reduction, from thousands approved last year to only a few hundred this year, raises urgent questions about how eligibility, funding, or program design has changed.

Given the importance of teacher retention and support—particularly as Michigan continues to face shortages in critical subject areas and regions—the sharp decline in approved applications undermines both trust and morale in the teaching profession. Educators entered this process in good faith, many with significant financial need, and the denial of over 95% of applicants without a clear explanation sends a discouraging message at a time when we need to be supporting our teachers more than ever.

On behalf of educators, parents, and community stakeholders, I respectfully ask for:

1. Clarification on why such a high percentage of applicants were denied compared to last year.
2. A transparent explanation of changes in eligibility criteria, funding allocation, or administrative processes that may have led to this outcome.
3. Consideration of corrective measures, whether through supplemental appropriations, revised program guidelines, or additional technical support, to ensure that teachers who qualify are given fair and timely support.

Additionally, we would appreciate it if a member of your staff could provide answers to the following questions:

Of the 5,055 denied applicants, what percentage were denied because they did not:

- Show evidence of current participation in the federal Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) program or could not demonstrate that the months of payments they claimed were eligible under PSLF?
- Show evidence of participation in an income-driven repayment plan or failure to substantiate the months of payments claimed as made under such a plan?
- Show that claimed months of payments were actually owed or paid, or were still owed?
- Provide identifying information that would link the document to the applicant?
- Have employer verification of the employment criteria for the program?
- A completed employment verification by the applicant's employer?
- Submit before the deadline of May 19, 2025, at 5:00 p.m., and therefore were not reviewed or considered?

Michigan's teachers are essential to the success of our students and the future of our state. Providing promised financial relief through loan repayment programs is not only a matter of fairness, but also a necessary investment in keeping talented educators in the classroom.

Thank you for your leadership and attention to this urgent matter. I look forward to your response and to a solution that restores trust in this important program.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sal Lopez', with a stylized, cursive script.

Salvador Lopez
President
KConnect

CC:

Michael Rice, State Superintendent, Michigan Department of Education
Hon. Darrin Camilleri, Senator, Michigan State Senate