

STATE SENATOR • LIZ BRATER • 18TH DISTRICT

# Brater Press Release

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## **Brater's Bill to Raise Dropout Age to 18 Major Focus in State of the State** *Governor makes big push to pass Senate Bill 11*

LANSING-A proposal by State Sen. Liz Brater (D-Ann Arbor) to raise the high school drop-out age to 18 got a major push forward this evening as Governor Jennifer M. Granholm called on the Legislature to pass Brater's Senate Bill 11 in her State of the State address.

"Competing in the 21st century requires a solid education, starting with a high school diploma," Sen. Brater said. "Every Michigan child deserves a chance to succeed, and Michigan needs every one of its children to succeed-that's why we need to raise the mandatory school attendance age to 18."

Senate Bill 11 would raise the compulsory attendance age from 16 to 18. The bill recognizes that some children cannot thrive in the traditional classroom setting. It allows alternative and vocational education as well as community college courses to count toward graduation. Apprenticeship and work study programs are included in this distinction. Fifteen other states, including Wisconsin, Ohio, Minnesota, Texas, and Kansas, require school attendance to the age of 18.

Most adolescents lack the maturity to comprehend how severely their lives will be limited if they leave school. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, the average male high school dropout earns only \$19,000 per year while the average female drop-out makes only \$12,000. The average high school graduate will have an annual income at least 50% higher than his or her non-graduate counterpart. This disparity grows every year.

"If we want our children to find jobs, we must make a comprehensive effort to prepare them for the work force," Sen. Brater said. "The best thing we can do is make sure that each child reaches the highest possible level of education."

Aside from the price paid by the adolescent, there is also a severe social cost. According to the Department of Corrections, approximately 70% of the inmate population in Michigan prisons last year had not completed high school. It is cheaper and more humane to spend money earlier in life to educate children than to incarcerate them later. The state spends \$6,700 per pupil per year to educate them, but it costs almost \$30,000 per year to house a prison inmate.

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