



**Livonia PTSA Council - 15125 Farmington Rd, Livonia, MI 48154 - [advocacy@livoniaptsacouncil.org](mailto:advocacy@livoniaptsacouncil.org)**  
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The Livonia PTSA Council sent eight (8) questions to the candidates running for the Michigan State House of Representatives District #16 (Westland – part). Incumbent, Kevin Coleman (Democrat) and Challenger, Emily Bauman (Republican), replied as follows (5 pages)...

**Questions Regarding the Impact of the Coronavirus on Public Schools:**

- 1) **Livonia Public Schools decided to start the school year with remote learning and will transition to in-person learning later (details are being worked out) based on the State's Return to Learn Roadmap. Since it is understood this is a fluid situation what is your position on how the state, county, and school district should work together going forward?**

Reply:

**Kevin Coleman:**

While the Return to Learn plan passed by the legislature and signed by the governor is imperfect, it was a bipartisan compromise which has ensured a stable funding model for our schools, required transparency and accountability for student/teacher engagement, and kept the decision of in person versus remote learning where it belongs: at the local level. There is and will continue to be, a wide disparity in community spread between regions of the state. This necessitates different models of learning based on the conditions and needs of each community. Giving school districts the ability to determine if and when to return to in person learning for the 2020/2021 school year ensures that solutions can be tailored to each school district. As I see it, the state should continue to support the efforts of all districts, whether they are engaging in remote or in person learning, and work with the counties to ensure that they have the resources necessary to operate. County health departments are best situated to provide guidance to school districts when deciding when to return to in person learning.

**Emily Bauman:**

Overall I support in person education for our students. I am also supportive of Districts having the freedom to decide what is best for their body of students, parents and faculty. I believe every effort needs to be made to get students back into the classrooms.

- 2) **Remote learning has highlighted inequities throughout the state and within school districts, what is the State Legislature's role in providing resources to address access to computers, WiFi, food, special education services, and other student supports?**

Reply:

**Kevin Coleman:**

The pandemic has absolutely exposed challenges facing our students and teachers while creating new ones. Reductions in federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) funding has put a greater share of special education funding on the states. Thankfully, the federal government has granted flexibility in the National School Lunch Program which has been vital in providing food for students in food insecure homes and ensure they are able to learn. What has grown exponentially for school districts, is the need for technology purchases and upgrades. The legislature recently appropriated \$65 million for our schools from Federal Cares Act dollars to meet the new technology demands, remote learning materials, student mental health, and programs to address learning loss from last year and over the summer. As we identify additional needs, I will support the state identifying additional funding and prioritize K-12 schools in the budget process going forward.

**Emily Bauman:**

The State Legislatures role is ensuring monies designated for schools and educational services & resources are properly allocated. They need to provide accountability, transparency & oversight on both the distribution and use of funds. If necessary, the State Reps need to advocate strongly for the revenue sharing for their districts.

- 3) **How do you feel CARES money and any other future relief packages should be allowed to be used for education?**

Reply:

**Kevin Coleman:**

I supported the recent appropriation of \$65 million to meet pandemic related needs of our school districts and believe schools must be included in discussions of any future federal relief packages. There are short and long term budget implications of the pandemic and we will need further federal interventions unless state revenues rebound rapidly. While I am proud of the budget we passed this week for the 2020-2021 fiscal year, another economic downturn could threaten future budget reductions and the 2021-2022 fiscal year could be daunting. With the passage of the 2020-2021 fiscal year, we have allocated all of Michigan's federal CARES act dollars.

**Emily Bauman:**

I feel any monies from relief packages need to be allocated as intended and oversight, accountability & transparency be provided. Education services across the state does need to be a priority.

- 4) **As the state resolves budget gaps, how can education funding be protected? Especially considering it is predicted that school districts need additional funds to cover costs associated with our current health crisis.**

Reply:

**Kevin Coleman:**

The 2020-2021 fiscal year budget passed by the House this week ensured no reductions in funding for K-12 schools, restoring the proposed \$175 per pupil cut after state revenues were found to be higher than predicted and federal CARES Act funding was allowed to fill budget gaps in the upcoming budget. In fact, the state has approved a \$65 per pupil increase for next year to meet the needs of school districts with costs driven by the public health crisis. Despite cutting \$250 million in other budget areas, K-12 schools have been prioritized for the first time in many years. I am immensely proud of the work the legislature has done to ensure that our schools are seeing additional funds this year. I will continue to support further investment in education.

**Emily Bauman:**

As a State Rep, I will work hard to help ensure schools are receiving their monies and it is not being misappropriated.

**Questions Relative to Educational Funding in Michigan:**

- 5) **In the last few years there have been studies that show Michigan's public K-12 education is underfunded. These studies also demonstrate that students with different needs require different monetary amounts to be educated. What is your position on these studies? As a state representative, how would you approach making sure school districts have proper funding to educate each child?**

Reply:

**Kevin Coleman:**

My position, long before I was given the honor of serving as the state representative for the 16th House District, was that our schools need more funding and our students deserve access to higher quality education. We have spent at least a decade treating K-12 education as an afterthought. We were on our way to beginning to reverse this trend with a proposed \$225 per pupil increase for schools at the state minimum foundation allowance before the pandemic threw state budgets into chaos. While I am grateful that K-12 schools have done better than any other budget item in the 2020-2021 fiscal year, it is still not enough to make up for a decade of disinvestment.

It is a tragedy that IDEA and ESSA grants have decreased, as our schools depend on federal dollars to supplement state funds for special education. Each dollar the state does not receive to supplement those important services so that all students have access to learning, is a dollar the state has to take from other budgets or from within the education budget itself. Additionally, the legislature, prior to my service, created the third-grade reading law but failed to adequately fund intervention services so that students with reading difficulties could catch up and not be held back. We are doing a disservice to

these students by identifying their struggles and then not giving them the resources to combat these challenges. We must work to supplement the foundation allowance for school districts and provide additional funding through line items targeted at schools and students with needs that require additional services.

**Emily Bauman:**

I believe there are discrepancies in how funds are distributed to the school districts. I would like to see oversight and advocacy to ensure funds allocated for schools goes to the schools.

- 6) It has been more than 25 years since Proposal A was passed by the voters. How do you feel about how Michigan allocates funding for K-12 education recognizing the impact hold harmless districts have on educational inequities? What changes would you propose to address some of the challenges Proposal A has possibly created?**

Reply:

**Kevin Coleman:**

It has been 25 years, and there is still a significant discrepancy between the state minimum and maximum foundation allowance. The intention of Proposal A was for those numbers to be brought parity much sooner. First we must begin to bring the minimum foundation allowance up to bring greater equity to the largest source of school funding. Unfortunately, policy decisions made within the past decade have had serious ramifications for how Proposal A was intended to function, most notably funding universities and community colleges with money from the School Aid Fund (SAF). The SAF was never intended to fund higher education and hundreds of millions of dollars intended for our schools have been directed away from K-12 schools each year. We must stop taking dollars away from K-12 schools to fund universities, otherwise we will continue to see a lack of investment in our schools.

**Emily Bauman:**

It is vitally important that the quality of education be equal across districts and not dependent on zip code. Every Michigan student deserves the right to a level of education that prepares them for any opportunity they choose.

- 7) In November the Wayne RESA Enhancement Millage will be back on the ballot for renewal. If the renewal passes, for the first time, Charter Schools will receive a share of the funding. Do you support renewal of this millage? How do you feel about Charter Schools benefiting from this tax?**

Reply:

**Kevin Coleman:**

The Wayne RESA Enhancement Millage is absolutely vital for our schools and I fully support its renewal. While the state has done everything in its power to ensure funding for K-12 schools in the coming year, disinvesting at the local level would be a mistake given the additional costs of the current public health crisis and that the \$65 per pupil increase is not expected to continue after the 2020-2021

fiscal year. Wayne County School Districts cannot afford to lose \$80 million per year from their budgets.

Public Act 23 of 2018 was enacted before I began serving in the legislature and requires enhancement millages to also include charter schools. If I had been serving in 2018 when the bill was passed I would have opposed it. Charter schools are not held to the same standards as traditional public schools, have less oversight, fewer legacy costs, often lower transportation costs, and up to 80% of charter schools are operated by for profit companies. As such, I do not believe they should qualify for these funds until and unless they are treated the same as public schools in regards to oversight, requirement to take all students, and the many other regulatory exceptions for charter schools are closed.

**Emily Bauman:**

I do not support raising taxes before a review or reform of the way funds are allocated today is determined and/or corrected. I do support Charter Schools benefitting from monies allocated to public schools. I believe the per child allowance needs to go with the child. I also support ensuring all students receive a high-quality education

**8) In recent years, Livonia Public Schools had a bond, sinking fund, and operating millages approved by the voters. How do you feel about these ballot initiatives and did you support them?**

Reply:

**Kevin Coleman:**

I have supported these funding avenues and recognize the need to keep the operating millage which provides 17% of LPS operating budget and the sinking fund to repair aging infrastructure in the 23 buildings operated by LPS. While state funding has provided resources to operate, without these local funding solutions, our technology infrastructure, basic infrastructure like roofs and heating and cooling, would be in ruins.

**Emily Bauman:**

I will support voter approved millages, however as a State Representative, I will look at reform in how monies are currently spent/allocated before I will consider raising taxes.