

Youth, Rights & Justice

ATTORNEYS AT LAW

To: House Committee on Education

From: Mark McKechnie, Executive Director, Youth, Rights & Justice

Date: February 3, 2014

Re: Support for HB 4008

Chair Gelser and Members of the Committee:

Youth, Rights & Justice has represented tens of thousands of youth in the juvenile justice system since 1975 and thousands of youth in the education system. We have long taken an interest in educational services delivered to youth who are in custody.

We support HB 4008 to provide more adequate and consistent revenue to school programs serving youth in custody. This group of young people have extraordinarily high needs. As a group, these youth have more often:

- Changed schools multiple times;
- Missed critical instruction days; and
- Been excluded from school through suspension and expulsion.

In addition, delinquent youth are *three to six times as likely to require special education services*, compared to the general student population. They face a wide range of challenges, from learning disabilities to emotional problems related to their experience of trauma and other factors.

In addition to the challenges these students bring with them, detention school programs have the challenge to serve students who may be in their facilities for very short or much longer periods of time. They will have classes of students with a wide range of academic levels and capabilities, and they will need to educate students and coordinate transitions to and from a variety of different school districts.

In our experience, these programs are doing a commendable job trying to engage students and help get them back on track. For whatever period of time they have to impact them, these schools work to build academic skills and study habits and assist high school students to catch up on deficient credits.

Youth, Rights & Justice urges your support of HB 4008 to ensure that some of the most at-risk students in the state receive the educational services they need and deserve.

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