Dear Neighbor,

The past few months have been very busy here in your state Capitol. As always, we are committed to moving Michigan forward in many ways. This legislative term has been dedicated to brightening futures, making government more accountable and passing a responsible budget. We are making significant progress and I am confident that with our continued efforts we can stay on this positive path.

In January, we published an Action Plan to hold us accountable over the next two years. In the first six months of this term we have already achieved many of the things the Action Plan set out to do. To view a detailed progress report on the Action Plan, visit www.gophouse.org. We are putting Michigan taxpayers first by eliminating costly tax credits, addressing financially failing schools and reducing long-term financial obligations.

But, there is no such thing as good enough when it comes to hard-working Michigan taxpayers, so we will continue on this road of continued growth and work hard every day on our tax, spending and regulatory reforms that are driving our recovery. Inside you will find a summary of our efforts and accomplishments of the 2015-2016 legislative term so far. As always, if there is any time I can provide assistance, please do not hesitate to contact my office.

Sincerely,

MICHAEL WEBBER
State Representative, 45th District
Structural reform and smart spending are a big part of Michigan’s economic recovery. Continued vigilance and long-term thinking will help keep our momentum going. We are dedicated to creating a balanced and responsible budget that continues Michigan on the path of recovery.

For the fifth year in a row, the state saw a balanced budget completed four months ahead of schedule. The state is improving, but we still must operate on the principles of smart spending. The increases reflected in this budget are the same areas that local residents have asked me to fight for: schools and roads. The Fiscal Year 2015-16 budget reflects an additional $278.9 million investment in those two things.

As our state law currently stands, the Legislature can enact measures that bind local governments to pay for mandates that are not funded by the state. This disregard for local control forces local communities to move forward with cookie-cutter measures that may be detrimental for their locale.

Along with some colleagues, I have introduced a legislative package to end this unfortunately commonplace convention. Our package ensures that if state mandates create any new expenses for local governments, these expenses must be appropriated by the state. Additionally, in the event that an expense-creating mandate passes without appropriation, a local unit of government burdened by the mandate can bring legal action against the state.

House Bills 4753, 4754 and 4755 are available online for you to view. I welcome your support in fighting for an increase in local control and government transparency.
We’ve found a way to give more funding for pre-school, K-12 schools, community colleges and universities. This budget includes the most state funding for schools in Michigan’s history, totaling nearly $16 billion from all sources. Combined with the needed education reforms of the past several years, we are in a better position than ever to spend additional dollars, knowing that the money will be spent on kids in classrooms.

When making spending decisions on the state’s budget, I believe you have to look at the plan as a whole. My method is to weigh the impact of every hard-earned taxpayer dollar and support plans which make the most of every cent. This budget is a strong compromise between preserving existing funds and investing in areas of great need.

**Giving At-Risk Kids a Brighter Future**

We believe education is one of the best ways to escape generational poverty and increase a child’s future quality of life. However, the child has to consistently attend school in order to learn. So, we have made the attendance requirements of Michigan’s compulsory school attendance law an eligibility requirement for recipients of Family Independence Program (FIP).

FIP is a cash-assistance program for struggling Michigan families allowing them to pay for necessities including personal care items, gas and rent. There must be a child under 18 (or 18 and still in high school) in the program group to be eligible and benefits have a 48-month state cap. A program group is defined as anyone who applies together (both adults and dependents) and receives the benefit, usually family units. Food assistance would not be affected.

Families who don’t ensure their children receive a proper education aren’t giving them the opportunities they need to break the generational cycle of poverty. Welfare programs are designed as a hand-up to help families in need; requiring school attendance in order to receive benefits is common-sense legislation that will ensure all Michigan children get the education they deserve.

**Making Government More Accountable**

**Reforming Civil Asset Forfeiture Laws**

We are committed to protecting the property and due process rights of Michigan’s citizens, so we are reforming civil asset forfeiture laws which allow police to seize property from residents believed to be involved in criminal activity—even if charges are never filed.

An eight-bill package will bring culpability and transparency to the system by strengthening forfeiture reporting requirements for law enforcement agencies and raising evidentiary standards in drug and public nuisance cases from a “preponderance” of evidence to “clear and convincing” evidence.

The legislation will protect the public’s right to reclaim their property, when applicable, but also enable law enforcement to do its job and legitimately claim property proven to have been used in criminal activities.

**Stopping Extensions on Budget-Busting Tax Credits**

The Michigan House passed two bills this May prohibiting the state from extending costly corporate tax credits. These credits are currently allowed under the Michigan Economic Growth Authority Act (MEGA). MEGA credits created a $325 million budget shortfall this year, and the projected liability is $9.38 billion over the next 17 years. The legislation prevents modifications or amendments to existing agreements. Together, the bills prevent this liability from growing further out of control.

The MEGA credits, which initially started as a small program aimed at creating jobs, were greatly expanded in 2008, but in 2011 the Legislature and Gov. Rick Snyder ended the MEGA program. However, even with the costly program’s demise, the existing credits are still permitted to be increased and extended until 2032. This legislation prevents this from happening.

These bills passed in the House by a large margin and are part of House Republicans’ continued effort to cut deficit.