MICHIGAN LEAGUE FOR PUBLIC POLICY

Date: Thursday, June 4, 2026

To: Chair Hoadley and members of the House Committee on Economic Competitiveness

From: Anne Kuhnen, Kids Count Policy Director, Michigan League for Public Policy

Subject: Opposition to House Bill 5727 — Weakening of Youth Employment Standards Act

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On behalf of the Michigan League for Public Policy, I thank Chair Hoadley and members of the Committee on Economic Competitiveness for the opportunity to express our opposition to House Bill 5727. Not only would the proposed legislation undo the positive changes to the Youth Employment Standards Act (YESA) made by Public Act 196 of 2024, but it would go a step further by weakening restrictions on dangerous work for children in direct violation of federal law.

The League is a nonpartisan research and advocacy organization that promotes economic opportunity for all and analyzes the impact of public policy on the lives of Michiganders who have been systemically left out of prosperity. The League is also the state's Kids Count organization, working as part of a national effort to measure the well-being of children at the state and local levels and to shape efforts that improve their lives.

**HB 5727 puts child workers at risk by eliminating Michigan's youth work permit system.** State systems for documenting youth employment through the issuance of work permits are effective at ensuring young people can gain valuable work experience while preventing child labor violations. Research has shown states with work permit requirements see 17% fewer child labor violations under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) and 43% fewer children involved in those violations.[1]

A centralized system for work permits enables more effective enforcement of child labor law. From 2020 to 2025, the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity (LEO) identified over 1,200 child labor violations and issued corrective action notices to these

[1] Fred (Jiacong) Bao and Ashish Kabra, "State Mandated Employment Certificate for Minors Reduces Child Labor Violations in the US," June 7, 2024, https://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4857432.

employers during investigations into YESA complaints.[2] Work permits also allow the department to proactively inform employers of regulations. In this way, work permits are good for employers, who want to follow the law, and for parents, who seek to be informed of their child's rights in the workplace.

HB 5727 replaces the systems that exist to provide work permits to children and authorization to employers with a weaker age verification system. In addition, the bill would strip LEO's ability to revoke work authorization based on school performance, allowing a student under age 16 to continue working even if the student is chronically absent, falling behind academically or exhibiting disciplinary issues.

**HB 5727 weakens regulations on the employment of children under age 16 in violation of federal law.** The proposed changes to work hours, late-night work, and hazardous work directly violate the FLSA rules on child labor.[3] These proposed discrepancies between state and federal law – documented in Table 1 – create confusion for employers and put employers at risk of federal enforcement, which can result in fines.

*Table 1: Child labor rules for workers ages 14 and 15*

| Issue | Federal law | HB 5727 |
|---|---|---|
| Work hours | Minors are permitted to work up to 40 hours per week, 8 hours per day when school is not in session. | Minors would be permitted to work up to 48 hours a week and up to 10 hours a day. |
| Night work | Minors may work between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. when school is in session and between 7 a.m. and 9 p.m. during the summer. | Minors would be permitted to work until 9 p.m. during the school year. Minors could also seek permission from LEO to work between midnight and 5 a.m. |
| Hazardous work | Minors may not use power-driven mowers, cutters and trimmers. | Minors would be permitted to use power-driven lawn mowers or cutters. |

The proposal to allow children under 16 to work with power-driven tools is alarming and dangerous. Employers are justifiably prohibited from employing 14- and 15-year-old workers from occupations known for high numbers of workplace fatalities and injuries. Although rates have fallen over the years as workplace safety has improved, boys and young men ages 14-21 in Michigan face the highest rate of work-related amputations of all age groups.[4] Landscaping work is inherently dangerous, and FLSA-covered employers who hire children to work in these prohibited activities would be in violation of federal law.

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[2] Special data request through the Michigan Department of Labor & Economic Opportunity.
[3] "FLSA - Child Labor Rules," U.S. Department of Labor, accessed May 29, 2026, https://webapps.dol.gov/elaws/whd/flsa/cl/t14.asp.
[4] James Hosner and Kenneth Rosenman, *Work-Related Amputations Michigan 2018-2020* (Michigan State University, Department of Medicine, 2022), https://oem.msu.edu/images/annual_reports/Amputations/2018-2020_Amputations.pdf.

Furthermore, excessive work hours and late-night work can put youth mental and physical health at risk. Research on teen workers has shown a relationship between reduced school night sleep and increased odds of work-related injury.[5] Teens need more sleep than adults due to their ongoing cognitive development and physical growth, and limitations on work hours for children under age 16 are designed with their healthy development in mind.

At its heart, HB 5727 seeks to undermine federal law – to the detriment of employers who want clear guidance for hiring minor workers – and weaken LEO's capacity to track minor employment and enforce the law. We respectfully ask you to reject this dangerous legislation and protect kids from exploitative child labor in the state.

[5] Janessa M. Graves and Mary E. Miller, "Reduced Sleep Duration and History of Work-Related Injuries among Washington State Adolescents with a History of Working," *American Journal of Industrial Medicine* 58, no. 4 (April 2015): 464–71, https://doi.org/10.1002/ajim.22416.