

MISD enhancement millage on the March 10 ballot

By: [Maria Allard](#) | C&G Newspapers | Published February 21, 2020



MACOMB COUNTY — Come March 10, voters will decide on a Macomb Intermediate School District Regional Enhancement Millage Proposal. The initiative is a 1.9 mill 10-year county-wide millage proposal that will generate funding for Macomb County's 21 public school districts if it is approved.

If passed, revenue raised by the proposed millage will be collected by the Macomb Intermediate School District, or MISD, and distributed in accordance with state law to local public school districts and eligible public school academies and public charter schools within the boundaries of the MISD. The revenue would be distributed to each individual district based on the number of students, and each district will be able to use the funding to its discretion.

For a home valued at about \$200,000, the 1.9 enhancement millage would cost approximately \$190 per year, or approximately \$95 per year on a home valued at \$100,000.

The millage would raise an estimated \$55 million if approved and first levied in 2020. The millage will raise money for 10 years.

According to school officials, each district would receive over \$400 per student per year. Chippewa Valley Schools Board of Education Trustee Elizabeth Pyden said the money can be used toward improving safety measures, updating security systems, expanding career technical education, for classroom materials, literacy materials, hall monitors; updated curriculum and much more.

"Every school board will have the opportunity to say what would be best in their community. I'm very optimistic this is going to pass," Pyden said. "This is something that is long overdue. This is really an opportunity for our kids."

"People know these are strong schools. The enhancement millage is about our kids," Pyden continued. "It's about maintaining our property values. It's maintaining an investment in your community."

John Duffy, president of the Michigan Education Association Local 1, or MEA, said that the money that will come in through the millage also can be used to address mental health issue concerns in the schools by staffing more social workers and counselors. The MEA represents 14 school districts in the county in teaching, transportation, maintenance, paraprofessionals and office staff.

If the millage passes, "it's our money," Duffy said.

"It's for our kids. The state can't touch it. The money will be allocated to each school district based on their student count. The allocation is strictly based on the number of our kids," he said.

If the ballot proposal passes, Duffy said the MISD would be the ninth district to pass such a millage in the state.

“This (millage) has to be done. There is a serious funding shortage,” Duffy said. “Funding has not been stable.”

Education funding worsened during the state’s economic downturn in 2008. Educators have complained for years that state lawmakers are not funding public education properly.

As an example, during the 2011-2012 school year, \$470 in per-pupil funding was cut from the state budget. Some funding was replaced in subsequent years, as districts received an additional \$30 for the 2013-14 school year, and an additional \$50 in 2014-15. The following year, public school districts received \$70 more in per-pupil funding. An additional \$60 was approved by state lawmakers in 2016-17.

If the MISD enhancement millage passes March 10, Duffy said school districts would start receiving funding in the 2020-2021 school year. Residents would first be taxed in the summer of 2020, said Duffy, who also teaches part time at Wolfe Middle School in Center Line.

“You’ll see an immediate impact,” Duffy said, adding he is confident the millage will pass.

Macomb County Commissioner Leon Drolet, R-Macomb Township, said he is against the millage proposal for a number of reasons.

“This is not a tax renewal, it’s a brand new tax and a very expensive one,” he said.

In areas like Macomb Township, he said that homeowners will pay about \$300 a year for 10 years for this millage.

Drolet called the millage a “money grab” from the citizens.

“I believe that placing an issue on the March election, opposed to November, is a way to try to avoid as many voters as possible and select the voters they would rather have voting,” he said.

The March 10 presidential primary features a large field of Democratic candidates. President Donald Trump is largely uncontested on the Republican side of the ballot.

“If they have a serious case they want to make for additional funding, they should make that to residents in a normal election,” Drolet said.

Polls will be open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. March 10.

Staff Writer Alex Szwarc contributed to this report.