



GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
LANSING

GARLIN GILCHRIST II
LT. GOVERNOR

September 30, 2022

Dear Concerned Parents, Students, Teachers, and Community Members:

As Yom Kippur approaches, we want to take a moment to address the serious concerns raised around this year's Count Day in Michigan.

As you know, Count Day marks the beginning of a period when schools must conduct a census to help the state determine future education investments. State law requires Michigan schools to hold Count Day on the first Wednesday in October, which this year coincides with Yom Kippur, Judaism's most holy day.

Understandably, parents, students, teachers, and other community members are concerned about what this means for school funding and importantly, for counting students observing Yom Kippur on October 5th. We understand this concern and have evaluated options at length with the Michigan Department of Education and others. Count Day is the start of a month-long period. As such, we want to assure you that students who are absent on October 5th because they are observing Yom Kippur have a full month to be counted in enrollment. With that, we are confident that every student will be counted, and that no school district in Michigan should lose out on any funding as a result of Count Day falling on October 5th.

Nevertheless, we acknowledge that current state law has sent a painful signal to Jewish Michiganders, who already bear the weight of historic marginalization and persecution. Simply put, the law needs to be changed. Every student, parent, and education professional deserve certainty that they will be afforded equal resources regardless of their religious beliefs, and to know that they are welcome, valued members of the broader Michigan school community.

We stand ready to work with our partners in the Michigan Legislature to change the law around Count Day to ensure flexibility and prevent any circumstance in the future that would compromise the State of Michigan's support of communities of faith. We are deeply committed to student success, both through investing in our students and schools and ensuring that our schools are welcoming communities for all students and staff. We thank you for your heartfelt engagement and ongoing partnership on this issue.

To all Jewish students, staff, and families observing Yom Kippur, we wish you a meaningful day of fasting and prayer on this most holy and solemn of days.

Sincerely,

Gretchen Whitmer
Governor
State of Michigan

Jeanice Swift
Superintendent
Ann Arbor Public Schools