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Legislative action praised by construction trade group

Today's passage of higher education budget language to deter public universities from engaging in unionizing activities is the right move, according to Associated Builders and Contractors of Michigan, which pushed for a legislative response after learning recently that Michigan State University had taken over an AFL-CIO program.

"The classrooms of public universities should not be sites where union officials plan efforts to infiltrate private companies," says Chris Fisher, ABC of Michigan president/CEO. "It's not an appropriate use of taxpayer funds."

Language in a conference report requiring neutrality with regard to union organizing activities is part of the 2014/2015 Higher Education budget recommendation, now on its way for final legislative approval. It addresses concerns that ABC of Michigan and other groups raised upon learning that MSU's School of Human Resources and Labor Relations had taken over the operation of the Building Trades Academy, previously run by the AFL-CIO.

Section 271a of the budget language approved today states: *"It is the intent of the Legislature that a public university that receives funds under section 236 shall not knowingly and directly use any portion of those funds to offer any instructional activity that targets specific companies or specific groups of companies for unionization or decertification of a union."*

Specific course descriptions outline the objectionable curriculum content: *“This course offers a comprehensive overview of organizing issues related to the construction industry, offering constructive ways to organize the industry...”* Another course focuses on preparing *“...building trades organizers to conduct effective in-person meetings with non-union contractors both inside and outside of the context of organizing.”*

“We appreciate the Legislature’s action to help protect against using taxpayer funds to target companies for unionization,” Fisher notes.

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ABC of Michigan is a statewide trade association representing the commercial and industrial construction industries, dedicated to open competition, equal opportunity and accountability in publicly and privately funded construction projects