

Action Alert!

Time-sensitive facts regarding
legislation affecting Michigan's
children and families.

for Child and Family Advocates



April 11, 2011

Take Action to Preserve Great Start Collaboratives in Michigan

Michigan's 54 Great Start Collaboratives (GSCs) serve all counties in the state, and bring together parent leaders and community decision-makers from diverse sectors, including education, business, clergy, law enforcement, service providers and parents; to create and implement school readiness plans. Each collaborative partners with a local Great Start Parent Coalition (GSPC), comprised of parents of children under the age of 12, who provide a parent voice as they educate community and state leaders about the importance of investing in young children.

Funding Trends: In fiscal year (FY) 2007, \$1 million in new funding was approved through the K-12 School Aid budget for the creation and support of local GSCs and GSPCs, with funds going directly to Intermediate School Districts as the fiscal agents for the Collaboratives. Funding for these local entities was increased to \$1.75 million in FY 2008 and to \$6.75 million in FY 2009. In FY 2010, funding was cut to \$6 million, where it remains in the current fiscal year.

Fiscal year 2012 budget recommendations: In his budget plan for FY 2012, Governor Snyder has recommended that funding for the local GSCs and the GSPCs be continued at the current level of \$6 million. As the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee for K-12 School Aid began its budget deliberations last month, Senator Howard Walker (R-Traverse City), Chair of the Subcommittee, proposed a budget plan that eliminated the \$6 million in funding for GSCs. His proposal has yet to be voted on by the Subcommittee.

What You Can Do: Talk to your legislators about the important role GSCs are playing in coordinating services for children ages 0-5 and their families, improving efficiencies, and leveraging new private and federal investments. Important the week of April 11th will be to communicate with Senators and Representatives who sit on the Appropriations Subcommittees on K-12 School Aid, as this is where GSC funding is currently at-risk.

Talking Points:

- Currently early childhood programs in Michigan are funded by different sources at varying levels of investments, each with different regulations and eligibility requirements. This fragmented system makes it very difficult for parents of young children to access needed services. The purpose of the GSCs and GSPCs is to work at the local level to coordinate and integrate early childhood programs to better serve young children and their families.
- By improving access to services, GSCs and GSPCs help ensure that more children are school-ready when they arrive in kindergarten.
- GSCs have leveraged over \$10 million in investments from local businesses and foundations for local early childhood programs and efforts. (Include local statistics if possible)
- A Wilder Foundation study found Michigan's cost savings and revenues realized due to the investments in school readiness over the past 25 years was an estimated \$1.15 billion in 2009 alone.
- More than 12,000 parents participate in the GSCs and GSPCs. Parent involvement and engagement is key to school success for kids. (Include local statistics if possible)

Helpful Links:

- [Find out who represents you](#)
- [Members of the House and Senate Appropriations Subcommittees on K-12 School Aid](#)
- [Appropriations Subcommittee Committee Schedules](#)
- Read the [Issue Analysis on the importance of Great Start Collaboratives](#)