

April 2018

## A Statewide *Early On*® Michigan Investment - UPDATED

*Early On*, Michigan's Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part C program, provides intervention services to families with infants and toddlers birth through age three who have a physical, cognitive, adaptive, social, and emotional developmental delay or a condition that could lead to a delay. *Early On* is proven to work for young children, particularly those with milder disabilities,<sup>1</sup> saving the state because many children no longer need or need less special education because of their *Early On* experience. Unfortunately, many infants and toddlers do not receive *Early On*, despite the program's cost-saving and developmental benefits. Two-thirds of children in early or preschool special education did not receive *Early On* services. Of these children, the 87% are eligible for special education due to eligibility categories that would be responsive to early intervention. Michigan sees significant savings for the 37% of infants or toddlers receiving *Early On* who do not go on to require special education, and those savings would increase with more *Early On* capacity.

A lack of funding prevents *Early On* from serving all infants and toddlers who need it. Michigan gets \$12.4 million in IDEA Part C funds to serve 19,000 children, about 40% of whom are also eligible for other special education funds due to their delays. The rest are eligible for *Early On* only. Local and intermediate school districts (ISDs) are left to supplement the \$12.4 million with local millage dollars, which are not consistently available across the state. Some ISDs reimburse Medicaid and cobble other funds, but many lack the capacity to do this sustainably. Michigan is unique for saddling local counties with the cost burden of *Early On*.

Local millage values vary widely by county and by the extent to which revenues are spent on *Early On*. As a result, thousands of children from birth to age three receive inadequate *Early On* services or none at all. ISDs cannot shoulder the cost of providing *Early On* alone. Of the families with children in early special education who did not receive *Early On*, 48% are low-income.<sup>2</sup> ISDs serving lower-income families tend to have fewer resources themselves, creating large disparities between ISD *Early On* programs and eventual cost savings.

**Current Situation: The Governor, House and Senate all included a \$5 million state appropriation for *Early On*, a 50% increase in state *Early On* funding. While the Governor set up the increase as a pilot program, both the House and Senate simply increased funding through the existing need formula. Because the House and Senate are in agreement on this line item, it is unlikely that it would be changed in the budget Conference Committee.**

### Action Needed:

1. Thank legislators for the recommended \$5 million state appropriation for *Early On*.
2. Let them know that this funding represents a start in the process of building a high quality, accessible system throughout the state, it does not go far enough. At least \$11 million is needed to provide similar services to what is available in most other states, and a significantly higher increase would be needed for every county to match the highest quality services currently provided in pockets around the state.

<sup>1</sup> Downloaded from <http://pedinreview.aapublications.org/content/35/1/e1>

<sup>2</sup> Michigan Department of Education, Office of Special Education, Fall 2016