



What Budget Deal Means for Advocates

Yesterday, Michigan's Governor and Legislature agreed to a deal for the FY23 state budget that includes some significant investments into critical services for children, youth, and families while still leaving billions of dollars in surplus funds on the table, notably for the purpose of negotiating a tax reform plan later in the year. The budget has been passed by the Legislature and is heading to the Governor's desk for signature.

Some highlights of the major investments that will benefit kids and families include:

- \$312 million for special education services
- \$295 million for K-12 workforce initiatives
- \$25 million for afterschool programs
- \$10 million for loan forgiveness for behavioral health professionals

These are wins worth celebrating and gratitude for the lawmakers who championed them. But the big picture that led up to one frenzied day in Lansing yesterday is what matters most for advocates.

Michigan has acted particularly slowly to allocate its historic one-time revenues. The urgency to invest in children, youth and families has been selective. Funding to expand mental health services, afterschool programs, and the Earned Income Tax Credit took a backseat in the Legislature to bills providing giveaways to big businesses, auto shows, snowmobile trails, and ski jumps.

This is frustrating because our elected leaders have demonstrated before that prioritizing what is proven to impact our state's kids and families is possible and effective. When Michigan's leaders acted in a bipartisan way, at the urging of thousands of advocates, to allocate over \$1 billion in federal child care funds last October, we stabilized a child care system that was on the brink of collapse, ensuring that more working families would have a trusted child caregiver to turn to when they returned to work. The work is far from over, providers are still reeling and families are still paying too much out of their own pocket, but we kept things from collapse.

What's next? The Legislature will break to campaign until the August primary. Then, they will return, likely in September, to attempt negotiations on either additional spending, or a tax reform plan, or both. There is a very real chance that those negotiations result in nothing and that no direct economic relief comes for lower-income working families until after the November election.

Urgent action that meets the needs of children, youth, and families based on challenges they face is the key to securing Michigan's future. We've seen that it's possible.

We must work through this summer and fall, including during the elections, with that in mind.