



AN ISSUES PRIMER FOR MICHIGAN'S 2013 LEADERS

**FROM CRADLE TO CAREER:
EARLY CHILDHOOD**

**GROWING MICHIGAN'S
WORK FORCE
FROM THE START**

**ECONOMIC IMPACT:
ASTRONOMICAL**

WHERE MICHIGAN STANDS

The children of Michigan will be our future scientists, entrepreneurs, teachers, parents, laborers, artists and elected officials. Ensuring all young children have a healthy start in life is essential to Michigan's economy. Scientists have proven that by the time children reach school age, between 80 and 90 percent of the intellectual and emotional wiring of their brains has been set for life. Despite the evidence that children's earliest experiences affect the very architecture of their brains, too many young children face difficulties that may affect their long-term well-being and success.

- More than one of every four children in Michigan under age six live in poverty, with much higher rates for African American (55%), Hispanic/Latino (40%), and Native American (43%) youngsters.
- Nearly 1,000 Michigan infants die in the first year of life, with Michigan ranking 36th in the U.S., largely because African American children are three times more likely to die before age 1.
- The state's youngest children are more likely to be the victims of child abuse and neglect, with the number of child victims up 21 percent in the first decade of the 21st century.

Too few services are available to help parents become their children's first and best teachers, and to prevent child abuse and neglect. Michigan has devoted few resources to supporting parents, and deep cuts have been made in prevention and family support programs. Though small increases in investment for home visitation programs have been made through both federal and state funds, home visitation programs only reach approximately 20 percent of Michigan families with young children who are eligible for services.

Too many children enter school unprepared due to lack of access to high quality early learning and preschool programs. An estimated 38,000 four-year-olds at-risk of school failure currently eligible for Michigan's Great Start School Readiness program are not served because current funding levels allow for less than half of all eligible children to enroll. A 2009 survey of Michigan kindergarten teachers found that one-third of children entering their classrooms are not ready to learn, and the lack of opportunity to attend a preschool program is a primary reason that kindergartners are trailing behind their peers. Further, 9 out of 10 kindergarten teachers report that the time needed to work with children who are behind when starting school affects their ability to teach the rest of the students in their classes.

Key Stats

1 of every 4 Michigan children under age 6 live in poverty

21% increase in child abuse victims in the first decade of 21st century in Michigan

35% of Michigan kindergartners are not ready to learn

\$1.1 billion saved in Michigan in 2009 due to school readiness efforts since 1984

83% of Michigan voters think early ed programs are absolutely necessary

In addition over 50,000 young Michigan children are in child care settings subsidized by the state so their parents can work or participate in training and education programs. Due to Michigan's extremely low subsidy payments, half of the children in publicly-subsidized child care in Michigan are in unregulated care, where little is known about safety or quality—a rate much higher than other states.

Michigan is poised to make great strides to ensure that all children have a healthy start in life and can start kindergarten with the tools they need to succeed in school and life. In 2011, Governor Snyder created the Office of Great Start – Early Childhood within the Michigan Department of Education to consolidate and coordinate early childhood programs with the following intended outcomes: all children are born healthy, are developmentally on track from birth through third grade, are ready for kindergarten, and are reading proficiently by the end of third grade. The new office is an excellent focal point to highlight and expand evidence-based programs that improve outcomes for young children.

BUDGET IMPACT

Early childhood programs have been cut, and continue to be at-risk. In recent fiscal years, state lawmakers closed the budget deficit by reducing child care subsidies for low-income working parents, eliminating child abuse and neglect programs such as the 0 to 3 Secondary Prevention program, and reducing family support programs such as the family independence program and the EITC.

The failure to invest in early care and education has a negative impact on the economy. Research shows that every \$1 invested in high quality early care and education for low-income children reaps a return to society of more than \$16—a return on investment that has convinced leading economists of the importance of starting early. A 2009 Michigan study shows that the state saved \$1.1 billion in 2009 alone due to investments made in the state's school readiness efforts over the past 25 years, with savings accruing from reduced costs related to K-12 education, child abuse/neglect, crime, public assistance, and substance abuse. Further, every \$1 invested in early care and education in Michigan generates \$1.11 for a total of \$2.11 in new spending in the state. This is higher than investments in other major sectors such as construction, retail trade, manufacturing, transportation and utilities.

VOTER VOICE

Voters value early childhood services and are willing to pay for it. A 2009 poll of Michigan voters showed that most (83%) believe that early childhood development and education programs are an absolute necessity for their communities. Further, the majority favor making the funding investments needed to ensure all children arrive at school ready to learn—even if it increases their taxes. Finally, a majority of voters would cast their vote based on a candidate's position on early childhood investments.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

- Reform the state's early childhood system through the Office of Great Start – Early Childhood to improve coordination and impact, and to better integrate early learning with K-12 education.
- Ensure that early childhood investments are a top priority in the state budget.
- Make as a top priority investments in what all young children need to thrive, including:
 - Expanded access to high quality child care and early learning programs for children at-risk of school failure.
 - Improved access to preventive and primary health care through the expansion of pediatric medical home models.
 - Increased access for parents and caregivers of young children ages 0 to 3 to needed supports, including home visitation services for at-risk children and families.