



## Getting Michigan's kids out of poverty

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**Lansing, Mich. (WILX)** - Almost one out of every four children in Michigan lives in poverty according to the annual "kids count" report released Monday. That's a 26% increase in the last eight years.

Michigan is getting a failing grade on early childhood care.

"We have way too many kids living in poverty, way too many indicators of child's health and success not being obtained" said Michigan's Children's President Matt Gillard.

Michigan's Children focuses on affecting public policy for the state's children says compared to other states Michigan is behind.

"Up until last month we had put zero state dollars into our early on program," Gillard said. "We get about over 11 million dollars from the federal government that is dispersed to all 82 counties."

He says early childhood development needs to be a priority.

"That can really help families with young children that are dealing with either development delays or disabilities and put them on a path to success" Gillard said.

With limited to no state funding, schools like Ingham Intermediate School District struggle to get their students the help they need.

"Our special education dollars, our general education dollars are used to provide staffing in the services. There's a little bit of federal money that comes to the state" said Michelle Nicholson with Ingham Intermediate School District's Early Childhood Center.

She wants to see lawmakers investing more dollars into the growth of toddlers.

"They'll become better readers, they'll become better students, they'll become better citizens," Nicholson said. "They also need to have opportunities to be out with other children."

The House of Representatives' committee chair for Families, Children, and Seniors' Tom Hooker says there has been increased funding for Early On and early childhood development but admits more could be done.

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