



Michigan's Children is Thrilled with Governor's Announcement to Expand State's Preschool to All Eligible 4 Year Olds

Immediate Release

Contact: teri@michiganschildren.org

(June 8, 2021) Michigan's Children applauds Governor Whitmer's decision today to work toward extending high-quality, affordable early childhood education to all eligible families of 4 year olds in Michigan. In fact, we're over the moon by this announcement!

This is not only the right thing to do for Michigan families and the state's most at-risk children who have been shut out of preschool education though legally eligible, but it marks a momentous and historic point in the evolution of needed expanded public education to ensure a highly literate population and productive future workforce. Unless all at-risk Michigan children receive the targeted support they need to enter school ready to learn, develop reading skills and thrive, they and our state's future will continue to be compromised compared to other states.

We agree with the Governor's plans to employ federal dollars over the next three years to zero out the **extensive wait list** for the state's **Great Start Readiness Program** (GSRP). Currently funded at \$237.6 million annually, it is available today to 43,100 of the state's estimated 65,400 eligible children. By pairing federal funds through the American Rescue Plan with state School Aid Funds over the next three years, the state will be able to zero out the wait list for eligible 4 year olds, putting all at-risk kids on a better trajectory for school success.

There are several other key elements to this announcement that bear pointing out.

- It's extremely important that the plan also addresses a \$50 million investment of federal dollars into **quality improvements** to preschool options in underserved areas, particularly in curriculum and instruction, support for preschool teachers, and for connecting parents and children with available programs. This is critical for the integrity of the program and family success.
- The intent to replace federal dollars with state School Aid Fund dollars over time is also a critical component for sound planning and **ensuring sustainability**.
- The **pandemic** continues to teach us that our **economic viability** is rooted in necessary and timely investments in our state's children and families, especially with respect to their education.

As this plan is addressed by legislative leaders from both sides of the aisle, Michigan's Children urges lawmakers to recall that investment in quality preschool education is a bipartisan issue, and one thankfully we can all agree on. Nearly a decade ago, Republican Governor Rick Snyder won support from Democrats and Republicans alike over the then largest expansion in early childhood education in the nation following advocacy from business leaders, educators and advocates including Michigan's Children.