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Opinion: Michigan supports funding for our children's futures

Angelique Power and Bill Emerson

As a byproduct of the pandemic, many of us may have spent more time with our children than ever before; at dinner tables, over their shoulders helping with complicated math, explaining why they cannot have sleepovers or go to the movies with their friends. As a result, we know the past 18 months have deeply impacted our children, our neighbors' children, our nieces and nephews and our grandchildren.

There is much that divides us as a country — but one thing the vast majority of us agree on: Our kids aren't getting what they need to thrive, according to the people of Michigan at least, and we need to listen to the people.

In a [recent poll](#) of Michigan voters issued by The Skillman Foundation and Michigan's Children, 62% stated support for “increasing public funding for programs and services for children and young people in Michigan.”



It's encouraging to see an overwhelming number of Michigan residents acknowledge that children need more support. The problem isn't solely being talked about by advocates.

Nearly two-thirds of Michigan residents want to see more funding bolster the well-being and prospects of our young people. People from across the state, living in different communities and across racial, ethnic and economic lines, are standing together for Michigan's children.

Unlike so much of what we debate today, support for children is bipartisan. Republicans and Democrats alike recognize that investing in youth is essential. It is clear to us all that our prosperity is tied to the prosperity of all our children.

Why is there universal agreement that the more we invest now leads to universal gains for everyone later in life? In Michigan we understand that investment in children's well-being and education is a direct tie to our collective societal success.

Michigan's underfunded education system has long been a detriment to potential. New problems have also been exposed as COVID-19 has had a heavy impact on children. In addition to disrupted learning, the pandemic has weighed on children's mental health, further exacerbating the traditional stress and anxiety of growing up.

Investing in our youth is key to helping them prosper. And it can take many forms in addition to education, including mental health programming, specialized learning supports, out-of-school programs, skill-building experiences, career exposure and job training.

Michigan residents believe so strongly in the need to invest more in children that 58% support it even if it means raising their taxes. Funding for programs like this could come from many sources, but Michigan residents are saying that everyone is needed in this moment to add more investment — and that's putting your money where your mouth is. It's the exact level of enthusiasm we need at all levels if we're going to create lasting change.

Change requires everyone. We all have a part to play.

You can read and share the poll results at Skillman.org/MIKids to spur conversation in your community.

If you want to get more involved in championing statewide solutions, look to Michigan's Children, an independent voice working to ensure that public policies are made in the best interest of children from cradle to career.

There are also groups like Launch Michigan, a bipartisan group of education, business, civic and philanthropic leaders and parents, who are reimagining how schools are structured and funded to ensure equity, performance and accountability for all students.

Be vocal about the challenges you see children face and get behind efforts that support them. An additional millage appears on a ballot to support children? That's coming from you, me, we — this is what all of us have said is necessary. Our kids need every possible voice lifting them up.

Michigan has the collective attitude required to make a difference for our children's future. We must maintain this energy to double down for children in the coming years. What we plant now will blossom for generations.

The people of Michigan recognize the value, and necessity, of investing in our children. Now we need to see the same commitment from our leaders in Lansing.

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