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Supporting Adult Skill-Building and Family Literacy in the Michigan State Budget

Michigan's Children Calls for Adult Education Funding to Grow the Workforce and Improve Literacy Rates

Michigan's lawmakers are currently considering Governor Whitmer's recommendations and determining their own priorities for spending billions of one-time federal and state revenues for both current-year supplemental spending and for the 2022-2023 Fiscal Year, beginning October 1, 2022. In a public opinion poll of nearly 800 likely voters statewide, respondents across diverse regions of Michigan agreed that [addressing learning loss](#) is a top priority for public investment. Unfortunately, Michigan's early literacy outcomes are flagging.

A [recent statewide survey](#) found that half of Michigan third graders were listed as "reading deficient" at some point in the past three grades, and that almost half of teachers dedicated less time to reading instruction. Students of color, students from families with lower incomes, and students who shoulder more significant challenges like foster care, homelessness, or disability were disproportionately affected. All hands are needed on deck to support young children's literacy, and parents play a major role in their children's learning. Yet, Michigan has placed little focus on supporting the educational needs of parents with limited skills themselves.

Michigan's Children supports state investment into adult education programs for the 2022-23 Fiscal Year beginning on October 1, 2022 and for the current Fiscal Year. These programs equip parents who have achieved the least formal education credentials both to engage in their children's learning and to compete in a tight labor market. We recommend:

1. **\$20.2 million in one-time funding for adult education programs** to meet current needs.
2. **Ongoing sufficient funding for adult education** to hold programs, which meet critical student needs in communities, harmless from population shifts due to recent funding formula changes.
3. Support for programs like [Michigan Reconnect](#) and [Going Pro](#) to **connect otherwise eligible people who lack a high school diploma with adult education opportunities.**
4. **Amending current rules for Adult Education Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs to reflect who adult education programs are allowed to serve.** Adult education programs serve not only adults who lack a high school education but also adults who have a diploma but who test at very remedial skill levels. Adult Ed CTE program cohorts however can only have up to 25% of their students be people with a diploma, even if they have remedial skills. Some programs enroll their CTE students first in a high school completion course, then begin the CTE portion. Others cannot find enough students without a high school education who can attend the CTE program due to various barriers. These programs should prioritize the lowest-skilled learners but need flexibility to operate their programs effectively. The state at least should apply this metric to CTE programs as a state cohort rather than individually.

Right Now: Governor Gretchen Whitmer's budget recommendations contain no increase to adult education programs and tighten restrictions on adult education CTE program enrollment from 25% students who already have a high school education to 15%.

Why Invest in Adult Education?

Over 40,000 Michiganders aged 18-34 have less than a ninth-grade education and over 13,000 babies are born each year to a mom without a high school credential. An estimated 1.7 million Michigan adults fall below a ninth-grade level for reading and math, disqualifying them from access to post-secondary education and job training. For these adults to be self-supporting, public school and community-based adult education programs support young adults and parents to build literacy and other basic skills, earn a high school equivalency, and prepare for a career. Despite knowledge that parental education impacts children's education and life success, Michigan has failed to consistently invest into this critical piece of our education system.