

May, 2022

## 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*

The Michigan House and Senate have adopted their own initial budget plans for the 2022-23 Fiscal Year beginning on October 1. Legislators utilize these initial plans to distinguish their most unique priorities before negotiating between chambers and with the Governor, and they expect the final budget to look different from what they have put out right now. This means that advocates have an opportunity to draw sharp distinctions for policymakers regarding which proposals are strong, what could be stronger, and what critical needs are missing.

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. But unfortunately, Michigan's early literacy outcomes are flagging. A 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, including parents. Yet, Michigan has placed little focus on supporting the educational needs of parents with limited skills themselves.

**Right Now: Governor Gretchen Whitmer's budget recommendations contain no increase to adult education programs and tightens restrictions on adult education CTE program enrollment. The Senate and House also maintain current funding with no increases for adult education, however the House plan maintains current rules for adult education CTE program enrollment rather than tightening restrictions.**

Michigan's Children supports state investment for the 2022-23 Fiscal Year beginning on October 1, 2022 and for the current Fiscal Year into adult education programs, which 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 programs like Michigan Reconnect and Going Pro to **connect otherwise eligible people who lack a high school diploma with adult education opportunities.**
4. **Amend current rules for Adult Education Career and Technical Education (CTE) program to reflect who adult education programs are allowed to serve.** Only so many students who already have a high school diploma or a high school equivalency can be enrolled in Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs. However, adult education programs also serve adults who have a diploma but who test at very remedial skill levels. The state must eliminate this percent requirement or at least should apply this metric to CTE programs as a state cohort rather than individually.
5. **Support the House plan to at least maintain current regulations regarding enrollment of students with a high school-level education into Adult Ed CTE programs.**

## 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.