

May, 2023

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 newly-elected leadership 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 spending and for the 2023-2024 Fiscal Year which begins on October 1, 2023. Their choices could change the odds for children, youth, and families who continue to face hardships from years of public health and economic instability.

Lawmakers are looking to dig deeper to meet Michigan's goal of making sure that 60% of adults have a postsecondary degree or skill certificate by 2030. Lawmakers are also rethinking their approach to improving early literacy rates that remain below those of many other states. For both important priorities, parents and adults who have not yet achieved a full high school education present a great opportunity to move the needle. Yet, Michigan has placed little focus on supporting the educational needs of parents with limited skills themselves.

To equip parents to best improve their own skills and support their children's education, Michigan's Children recommends:

- **Support the Governor's recommendation for increasing ongoing adult education funding by \$15 million to a total of \$45 million.**
- **Support the Governor's recommendation to provide \$15 million in one-time funds for innovative programming to connect adult learners with postsecondary and workforce pathways.**
- **Support the House and Senate's recommendation for at least \$5 million of new investment to support community-based literacy programs in the Labor and Economic Opportunity Department.**

Right Now: Governor Gretchen Whitmer's budget recommendations contain an ongoing \$15 million increase for adult education programs as well as one-time \$15 million for adult learner postsecondary and workforce pathways in the School Aid budget but contains no dedicated increase for nonprofit literacy programs in the Labor and Economic Opportunity budget.

The House Appropriations Committee approved a plan with \$4.8 million for an Adult Literacy Opportunity Fund for nonprofit literacy programs in the Labor and Economic Opportunity budget, and \$15 million in one-time funds for innovative programming but no ongoing increase for adult education in the School Aid budget.

The Senate Appropriations Committee approved a plan with two separate \$5 million and \$7.5 million grants for nonprofit literacy programs in the Labor and Economic Opportunity budget and only a \$15 million one-time increase for adult education funds in the School Aid budget.

The House and Senate have passed budget drafts out of their respective Appropriations Committees, with the next step being a vote from the full chamber of each branch of government. After updated revenue estimates release in mid-May, legislative leadership will go negotiate their differences through a "conference committee", then present a budget for the Governor's approval.

Why Invest in Adult Education and Family Literacy?

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 the workforce development pipeline. 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. However, Michigan has consistently failed to invest into this critical piece of our education and workforce development system.