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Building Family Literacy – June UPDATE

Caregivers have a powerful influence on their children's lives. Over 40,000 Michiganders aged 18-34 have less than a ninth grade education and over 14,000 babies are born each year to a mom without a high school credential. Limited education leaves parents disadvantaged in the job market and in their abilities to both engage in their children's learning and navigate systems for their children.

Much attention has been placed on ensuring more young children are reading proficiently by the end of third grade. Despite research consistently showing the impact of parental education on children's education and life success, little focus has been placed on the importance of supporting the educational needs of parents with limited skills themselves. While some public funding streams may include family literacy as a component of their service provision, there is no dedicated public resource at the state or federal level to support family literacy, despite its importance to success.

Adult education programs support young adults and parents to build literacy skills, earn a GED or high school credential, and prepare for a career, improving workforce participation and family literacy rates. Despite their ability to provide critical literacy and other basic skill services across the state, these programs lack the capacity to meet the full demand. Investment in family literacy must be included and supported in third grade reading efforts and Michigan must continue to rebuild its adult education investment. Consistent and accessible family literacy programs can further the educational attainment and skill-building of parents, while providing opportunities for them to learn alongside their children.

CURRENT SITUATION: The Governor, House, and Senate have finalized their recommendations in these areas. Both chambers will go to a Conference Committee to iron out differences. It is unclear how long into the summer negotiations between the Legislature and the Governor will last. Informing elected officials about how best to prioritize spending our tax dollars must be a year-round endeavor.

Recommendations:

1. **Urge all parties to increase adult education funding by \$10 million.** The House and Senate both recommended flat-funding for adult education, but supporting family literacy is key to improving early literacy, especially for many of Michigan's most vulnerable families.
2. **Support increased investment in Early Literacy Coaches for teachers to better assist with read-at-home plans for Michigan families and require coaches to collect data and report on barriers that parents/guardians have with supporting their children's reading and other skill building at home.** The House and Senate have both recommended increased investment for Early Literacy Coaches, but no requirements for learning about the barriers that families experience completing read-at-home plans.