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### **Building Strong Families and Thriving Students by Supporting Family Literacy**

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 13,000 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, with significant consequences attached for students. 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 in order to assist in student success.

Adult education programs support young adults and parents to build literacy and other basic 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. Fully 70% of all adult education registrants have low literacy skills, and six in ten are parents of children school-age or younger. Funding for Adult Education has not been adequate to meet the need, and investments in support services and post-secondary paths have not benefitted the population. Child care subsidies are currently provided to fewer than 900 people who are using them for high school completion.

Michigan has seen significant investment in early literacy over the last couple of years, thought that investment has stalled in current budget proposals. This investment will only be realized if coupled with investments in adult education. Both can further the educational attainment and skill-building of parents, while providing opportunities for them to assist in their children's learning.

#### Recommendations:

1. Continue consistent support for Adult Education programs through School Aid and the Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity, coupled with a comprehensive needs assessment of parent basic skills and regional coordination to determine service gaps and needs to ensure improved access to quality programming statewide.
2. Support continued investment in the Michigan Reconnect Grant Program, which provides a path to a post-secondary credential for adults over 25, integrate options that help parents take advantage of the program like access to child care and other supports, and prioritize access to the program for adults from alternative and adult education programs.
3. Support increased investment in Early Literacy Coaches for teachers tied to strengthening the capacity of those coaches to assist with read-at-home plans for Michigan families. Require a system for collecting data and reporting on barriers that parents/guardians have with supporting their children's reading and other skill building at home.
4. Improve the coordination of family skill building initiatives with other services, including coordination of subsidized child care for adult learners and co-location of supports for children with education and workforce training programs for their parents.