

April 30, 2021

ARPA and Adult Skill-Building in the Michigan State Budget

The COVID pandemic has strained many caregivers with supporting their family's security and their children's education. Yet, 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 will leave parents, especially single parents and low-income families, disadvantaged in a recovering job market and in their abilities to both engage in their children's learning and navigate systems for their children. Despite research showing the impact of parental education on children's education and life success, insufficient resources are dedicated to supporting the educational needs of parents with limited skills themselves so they may best assist in student success. Significant commitments to early literacy over the last five of years will see the greatest return coupled with adult skill-building, which can further the education and skill-building of parents while helping them to support their children's learning.

Additionally, the COVID pandemic has only continue to exacerbate the long standing barriers that prevent adults from pursuing additional educational and training resources including access to affordable childcare, technology and internet connectivity, mental health resources, and transportation. Only through access to these wrap-around services coupled with strong support for educational and training opportunities through adult education can entire families capitalizing on their own potential.

Adult education programs support young adults and parents to build literacy and other basic skills, earn a GED or credential, and prepare for a career, improving labor engagement and family literacy rates. Despite their role in filling key state economic and educational needs, 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. Adult education programs fail to receive adequate resources due to low funds overall and grant approval burdens from legacy reporting mechanisms. Access to support services are also limited.

Current Situation: Neither House nor Senate proposal for ARPA federal funds currently include an increase in resources for essential adult education services.

Recommendations

- Invest \$12 million in currently-funded Section 107 and WIOA programs as well as non-profit literacy councils to integrate adult wraparound services including internet connectivity, child care, transportation, and supports for learners with disabilities.