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Supporting a Healthy Start in the Michigan State Budget

Michigan's Children Recognizes Funding Increases for Early Intervention and Home Visiting

The Michigan Legislature and Governor Gretchen Whitmer have reached a deal for the state budget for the 2023-2024 Fiscal Year which begins on October 1, 2023. The agreement includes a **funding increase of \$1.1 million for *Early On*, Michigan's early intervention program for children ages 0-3, and an increase of \$2 million in School Aid Funds for home visiting programs.** This funding will support the expansion of critical early developmental services to some additional families, but ultimately, we know that the current need among families is far greater than what was allocated.

How We Got Here

To improve families' access to comprehensive services for their young children's development, Michigan's Children supported:

- **A \$21 million funding increase for a total of \$42 million to bring *Early On* closer to the overall need of \$73 million.**
- **The Governor's proposed \$2 million increase for voluntary home visiting programs,** which would bring state funding for home visiting to \$4.5 million, increase the number of families receiving services, and bring Michigan closer to full investment in voluntary home visiting.
- **Inflationary increases** in all parts of the K-12 and DHHS budgets that support home visiting and the home visiting workforce.

Governor Whitmer's executive budget proposed a \$1 million increase for *Early On*. The House concurred with the Governor and the Senate proposed a \$1.3 million increase. The Governor also recommended a \$2 million increase for voluntary home visiting programs in the School Aid Budget, which would bring state funds for home visiting to \$4.5 million. The House and the Senate concurred. The final allocations are the product of negotiations among the different branches.

Why Invest in Early Intervention?

The early years are critical for shaping the trajectory of a child's development. Families with young children are still reeling from years of pandemic-related isolation which has affected both their children's development and how much help parents have been able to easily access. Unfortunately, Michigan has historically underfunded home-based early intervention services and voluntary home visiting services.

[Early On Michigan](#) connects families with service professionals who visit them at their homes to teach them skills for supporting their child's development at home, and connect them with resources such as

physical, occupational, and speech therapy to set up their child for success. *Early On* is available to families of all incomes. However, this critical public service has been chronically underfunded, forcing programs across the state to scrape together scarce local funding that often reflects the property values in their county. This leads to uneven service delivery where many kids are not receiving the frequency or types of services they need to thrive.

Since the pandemic, *Early On* programs across the state have received a record-high number of referrals while at the same time kids are being referred earlier and staying in the program longer. This has resulted in *Early On* serving the largest caseloads in the program's history. Meeting the identified statewide need of \$73 million is more important now than ever to combat learning loss and trauma that children experienced during the pandemic. Full funding would allow all Intermediate School Districts (ISDs) to coordinate their efforts statewide for detecting developmental delays so fewer children fall through the cracks.

Why Invest in Voluntary Home Visiting?

[Home visiting](#) is a voluntary program for caregivers with infants and young children and people expecting babies. Home visitors teach families about positive parenting, healthy pregnancy, healthy child, and child growth and development. Home visitors also make the determination to connect families to resources related to developmental delays and disabilities (*Early On*), health, housing, food, child care, employment, domestic violence, and mental health.

Professional home visitors help parents develop effective parenting techniques and build knowledge of developmental stages. These services are beneficial for the whole family and save taxpayers money by ensuring that children build strong relationships with their caregivers, have access to doctor's visits, receive early screening for disabilities and delays and other basic needs, and receive the emotional support that they need to thrive in adulthood. Home visiting provides wrap-around services for children's social, emotional, physical, and educational needs which reduces a child's future need for more costly services.