



March 21, 2023

TO: Michigan Legislators
From: Michigan Collaborative Teacher Leaders

We are a group of educators from across Michigan and members of the Michigan Teacher Leadership Collaborative, a program for highly-effective teachers led by The Education Trust-Midwest and Teach Plus. Through this program, we strive to ensure that our state policies benefit our diverse population of students.

Funding early childhood education equitably across the state creates economic opportunity for Michigan families and communities.

Yearly child care expenses can cost [\\$11,000 per year](#) in Michigan. This is prohibitive to many families and [deters some parents from working](#), creating a compounding economic impact.

“As career educators, my wife and I knew first-hand the impact of early learning on children. Yet, when our own children were approaching school-age, accessing high-quality early childhood programming didn’t make economic sense for us. Instead, we both paused our careers at different points to stay home. It was the GSRP that ultimately helped us to get our daughters the education they needed and allowed us to both work. This is an opportunity that all Michigan children and parents deserve.” -Frank Donner, DPSCD

We support the governor’s proposal of \$310 million for early childhood expansion which would create 5,000 more slots for four-year olds, expands the program from 4 days to 5 and increases the per-child funding by 5%.

Expanding access to preschool for all three- and four-year-old students to all students in the state of Michigan is a critical way we can ensure the best short and long term educational outcomes.

Governor Whitmer has prioritized early childhood education through her most recent budget recommendation, with a focus on programs for four year olds. We endorse this move, *and* push for expanding access to three year-olds to increase the impact of these programs even further. Children develop rapidly early in life, so experts [recommend](#) that early childhood education opportunities are provided to all young people, to increase the amount of positive, stable relationships in the child’s life, and to give them opportunities to learn and grow essential skills. *Additionally, studies have shown that completion of preschool programming can increase a student’s likelihood of high school graduation by 6%.*



Equitable access to high quality early child education is essential if the state of Michigan truly stands behind supporting all children of Michigan regardless of race, location, and socioeconomic background.

Michigan GSRP currently uses a [Child Opportunity Index](#) when assessing areas that need its programs the most. We recommend that this index continue to be a guide when looking at the areas of greatest need for early childhood education in the state. [Currently, only 31% of Michigan four year olds are enrolled in GSRP](#), but with a push towards greater access, far more children could enroll and ultimately reap the educational benefits of high quality preschool.

“The confidence and academic skills that GSRP gives students is evident when they reach my classroom in first grade.” -Josie Silver, DPSCD

As you consider your priorities for this coming fiscal year, we hope that you will fully support the Governor’s proposed 2023 budget in regards to early childhood education. Equitable funding, as well as expanded and equitable access to early childhood educational opportunities will benefit all Michigan children, and financial support is a critical part of making these programs a reality.

Sincerely,

Frank Donner, Assistant Principal at Gardner Elementary, DPSCD
Josie Silver, Elementary Montessori Guide at Palmer Park Preparatory Academy
Joy Lyman, Lead Instructional Coach at FlexTech High School