



March 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 highly selective leadership opportunity for outstanding Michigan teachers co-convened by The Education Trust-Midwest and Teach Plus. Through our work, we have identified Michigan's educator shortage as one of the largest obstacles now facing teachers and students alike.

Our experiences related to the teacher shortage are supported by data.

- The number of teacher vacancies reported by districts increased 68.71% from the 2019-20 school year to the 2021-2022 school year ([EPIC](#)). These numbers are likely underreported. This increase in teacher vacancies has left educators overworked, yet they remain undercompensated.
- Recertification rates decreased for Black and Latino teachers during the 2021-2022 school year, while recertification rates for white teachers remained about the same ([EPIC](#)). This demonstrates a disproportionate impact on urban, high-poverty districts across the state, where Black and Latino teachers often work ([EPIC](#)).
- The number of teachers in their first through fifth years of teaching made up 51.3% of educators in Michigan in the 2021-2022 school year. The number of teachers in their sixth through tenth years of teaching was at just 11.1% during that same school year, demonstrating that a large portion of the teacher shortage comes from teachers beyond their fifth year in the profession ([MISchoolData](#)).

While there has been action taken to reduce the teacher shortage by funding teacher recruitment programs, such as Grow Your Own Programs and stipends for student teachers ([Michigan Department of Education](#)) **these actions do nothing to retain the vital resource of experienced teachers.** In last year's [Fiscal Year 2023 Executive Budget Recommendation](#), a retention stipend was proposed in an effort to "make sure teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals, and non-instructional staff feel valued for their work" ([Fiscal Year 2023 Executive Budget Recommendation](#)). Unfortunately, this proposed incentive was eliminated from the final budget and has not been included in this year's proposed budget. In response to the growing shortage among Michigan educators, we advise the following as policymakers consider the Fiscal Year 2024 Executive Budget Recommendation:

[Recommendation 1](#): Include money in the FY 2024 budget for retention payments to all of Michigan's teachers, administrators, paraprofessional, and non-instructional staff. Payments would begin in the fall of 2023 and extend for three additional years. Staff who leave their district would no longer be eligible for payments unless they transition to a high-poverty school building.

- Teachers and other certified staff will be eligible for payments of up to \$16,000 over the next four years. Payments in year 1 will be \$2,500. Payments would increase to \$3,500 in 2024, \$4,500 in 2025, and \$5,500 in 2026.
- Administrators, paraprofessionals, and non-instructional staff would be eligible for payments of \$2,500 in 2023 and \$3,500 in 2024.

This recommendation comes from the [previously proposed budget](#), with an increase of \$500 in the initial payment, and the immediate increase of payment in year two. Both of these adjustments have been



proposed to account for the increase in the cost of living index since last year's budget ([U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics](#)). These conditions have impacted the lives of educators, and resulted in more teachers leaving the profession, leaving current teachers with higher workloads than even last year.

"I have been working at Grand Ledge High School for 8 years. My salary has still not yet reached \$50,000. This is simply not enough to support myself, let alone a family. I have been considering leaving the education field for a few years now. If I didn't have the support of my husband's income I would be forced to leave the field because I simply would not be able to afford basic life expenses on my own. These bonuses and higher pay are the only ways to retain teachers." - Sarah Coulon, Grand Ledge High School

Recommendation 2: Create a working group of teachers to make further recommendations when making the final decisions regarding policies that promote retention, including bonuses and incentives for those continuing to work in high-poverty districts, as they are added to the state budget.

As the group that is most directly impacted by these decisions, it is critical that educators be included in conversations regarding their compensation. This group should be reflective of the diverse population of educators from every geographic region of our state.

"Academic Achievement is being impacted with teacher turnover, especially in urban districts. Teacher retention bonuses are just as important as teacher recruitment bonuses. It is very important that we retain the teachers who have experience if we expect to obtain a level of excellence in the classroom. Recruitment bonuses are a temporary fix that don't address the underlying problem. It does no good to obtain the teachers if they don't stay. Retention bonuses are what is needed to keep the teachers we already have in the classrooms across the state." - Rhoshawda Miller, Ypsilanti Community Schools ELL Teacher

Recommendation 3: Fully fund the Governor's proposed investment of \$25 million for educator mentoring and induction efforts.

Mentoring new teachers provides veteran educators with an opportunity to grow professionally and exercise teacher leadership, which in turn impacts the likelihood of both new and veteran teachers remaining in the profession.

While significant attention is beginning to be made toward recruiting quality educators to the field, the reality is that educators will not stay in the profession without further retention efforts. If we continue to invest only in getting people into this workforce, we will continue to see dramatic turnover and a lack of stability among the teacher workforce.

Respectfully Submitted,

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