



To: Michigan Legislators

From: Teach Plus Michigan Teacher Policy Fellowship, Teacher Workforce Working Group

We are a group of educators from across Michigan and members of the Teach Plus Michigan Teacher Policy Fellowship, a highly selective leadership opportunity for outstanding Michigan teachers looking to deepen their knowledge of education policy and gain a voice in decisions that affect their students and the teaching profession. Through this program, we strive to ensure that our state systems and policies benefit our diverse population of students. This is especially true when it comes to the recruiting and retention of the teacher workforce.

Policy Goal:

By June of 2025, the Michigan Legislature will create and adopt policies that help to both develop the teacher workforce in the face of a growing teaching shortage and increase the diversity within the workforce. This can be accomplished by focusing on the following:

- **Increased teacher pay**
- **Increased funding of statewide Grow Your Own teacher preparatory programs**

Why These Issues Are Important:

Michigan is facing a statewide shortage of teachers and a critical gap between the diversity of teachers and an increasingly diverse student population. While a shortage of qualified teachers representing diverse backgrounds affects educational stakeholders at all levels, no one feels the impact of the shortages more than Michigan's students.

"In sixth and seventh grade, we were always getting new teachers and they never stayed very long. I got suspended all the time and didn't really learn anything. I don't think teachers not looking like me is the reason I was getting in trouble and not learning, but it is sometimes easier to talk to teachers when they do [look like me]." **-Student, Romulus Community Schools**

"After working as a classroom teacher for 9 and a half years, I just couldn't afford to teach anymore. I left and took a job where I was able to work only 3 days a week for more money. With having young children of my own, I saved on daycare costs and almost doubled what I was making as a teacher." **-Molly S., Former Teacher in Tuscola County**

According to *Closing the Opportunity Divide* by EdTrust Midwest and *Michigan Teacher Shortage Study 2025* by Education Policy Innovation Collaborative:

- Over the past decade, Michigan's teacher workforce has experienced significant attrition, with annual rates ranging from approximately 8% to 10% in general.
- Based on these attrition rates, it is estimated that approximately 80% to 100% of

Michigan's teaching workforce has turned over in the past ten years.

What the Evidence Shows:

- + Michigan's average starting teacher salary was \$38,963 in 2021-2022—18% lower than the average starting salary for other college graduates.
- + Despite the House recommending \$50M and the Senate recommending \$36.8M for Grow Your Own (GYO) programs, only \$19.5M was allocated to two regionally specific programs in the FY 24-25 final School Aid Budget.
- + According to the Michigan Department of Education, 44% of teachers recruited by state funded GYO programs identified as individuals of color versus 21% from traditional preparatory paths.

We Recommend:

- + Put in place legislation requiring a minimum starting salary for all Michigan teachers.
- + Restore GYO funding to the Fiscal Year 2023 level of 175 million dollars to ensure that aspiring educators from diverse backgrounds have the necessary resources to become licensed teachers in Michigan.

What we stand to gain:

A state-funded GYO program expands the diversity of the educator workforce by recruiting local talent, including paraprofessionals and career changers, from underrepresented backgrounds. By covering tuition, offering stipends, and providing alternative certification pathways, GYO programs make teaching more accessible while addressing shortages in high-need areas. Increasing teacher pay further strengthens recruitment and retention by making the profession more financially sustainable, attracting a broader pool of candidates, and reducing turnover. Having a diverse teaching staff benefits all students by improving academic performance, and creating a more supportive and engaging learning environment, further enriching students' educational experiences.

Considerations:

- Restoration of Fiscal Year 2023 funding to include statewide Grow Your Own programs requires an additional allocation of \$125 million to the Governor's Fiscal Year 2025 proposed budget.
- Implementing a statewide minimum teacher salary of \$50,000 in Michigan would require a detailed analysis of the number of teachers earning below this threshold. The average starting salary of \$38,963 for teachers in Michigan suggests a significant number of teachers earn below \$50,000 annually. Preliminary estimates suggest that an investment exceeding \$120 million would be required to achieve this salary floor statewide.

Respectfully submitted,

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