



2020 BUDGET PRIORITY: INCREASE ADULT EDUCATION FUNDING TO PREPARE MORE WORKERS FOR JOB TRAINING AND SKILLED WORK

LEAGUE RECOMMENDATION:

Increase adult education funding by \$10 million, to \$36 million, allowing the state to assist nearly 8,000 more students.

BACKGROUND:

In today's job market, entry-level job openings with a career track increasingly require a postsecondary credential such as a degree, certificate or license. Many Michigan workers need remediation in one or more basic skill areas in order to succeed in training that leads to these credentials. Adult education is a crucial link in preparing workers for training, credentials, and finally, skilled jobs. By increasing the number of work-ready individuals, serving more individuals through adult education also helps employers find the skilled workers they need.

Despite its importance as a workforce development tool, Michigan has greatly reduced its funding for adult education during the past 16 years:

State funding has dropped dramatically. During budget years 1997 to 2001, state funding for adult education was \$80 million a year, but the Michigan Legislature cut funding drastically after that to \$20-22 million annually. In budget years 2017 and 2018, the Legislature bumped up the funding to \$25 million and in 2019, to \$26 million—still far short of what is needed. Separate funding for career/technical education programs is also included, for total funding of \$29 million in 2019.

The funding loss for adult education is even greater when adjusted for inflation. In 2001 dollars, adult education funding has fallen by 71%.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

The funding cuts have resulted in fewer people enrolling in and completing adult education programs. The decrease in total funding since 2001 has been accompanied by a 45% decline in enrollment and a 34% decrease in students completing a grade level.

Many community college students are not academically prepared and more access to adult education can help them succeed. During each of the past 10 years, well over half of all community college students in Michigan have been required to take developmental (remedial) education courses, which cost money but do not count for credit. These students could benefit from being able to take adult education free of cost in place of developmental education.

Higher academic success through more access to adult education can help decrease racial disparities in poverty and income. In Michigan, poverty rates vary greatly by race and ethnicity, ranging from 29% (African American) to 12% (White). Household median income also ranges from \$76,370 (Asian) to \$30,732 (African American). Expanding adult education in Michigan can increase racial equity in educational access and achievement, which in turn can reduce income inequality.