



2020 BUDGET PRIORITY: PROVIDE MORE STATE FUNDING TO PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN HIGH-POVERTY COMMUNITIES

LEAGUE RECOMMENDATION:

Provide the resources needed to address the educational challenges faced by children exposed to the stresses of poverty by: 1) fully funding the At-Risk School Aid program; and 2) phasing in a School Aid formula that is weighted by the number of students in poverty, the number of English language learners, the district size and geographic isolation.

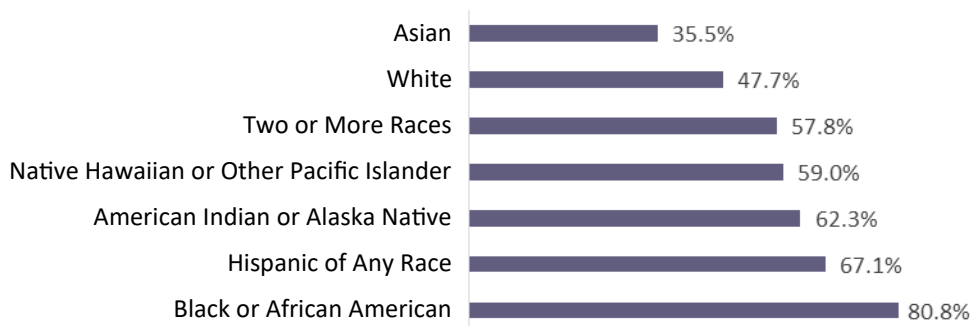
BACKGROUND:

In the 2018 budget year, 63% of Michigan public school students were in districts receiving the minimum foundation allowance of \$7,631 per pupil. The 2019 budget increased the minimum allowance by \$240 per pupil to \$7,871. Despite recent increases, the 2018 minimum per-pupil allowance was 7% lower than 2011 when adjusted for inflation. The nonpartisan Michigan School Finance Research Collaborative analyzed state funding for public schools and recommended in a January 2018 report that schools receive a base payment of \$9,590 per pupil, with additional funding weighted by the number of students in poverty, the number of English language learners, district size and geographic isolation—up to a maximum of \$11,482 per pupil.

The At-Risk School Aid program has been the primary vehicle for providing state funds to schools to serve students who are at risk of failing academically or are chronically absent. After more than a decade of flat funding, when At-Risk payments to districts fell well below statutory levels, the Legislature approved increases of \$70 million for the 2015-16 budget and \$120 million for 2017-18—along with some expansions in the number of students and school districts eligible for funding. Despite these increases, the At-Risk program is still not fully funded and payments are prorated.

CHILDREN OF COLOR MORE LIKELY TO ATTEND HIGH-POVERTY SCHOOLS, RESULTING IN INEQUITIES IN THIRD-GRADE READING

Percent of Third-Graders Not Proficient in English Language Arts (M-STEP 2017-18)



Source: MI School Data

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

The barriers faced by families in poverty can affect children's learning and success. While family income alone does not keep children from learning, the many problems faced by those living in poverty can—including low parental literacy, poor health, a lack of stable housing, frequent moves, less access to high-quality early education and care, fewer after-school or enrichment programs, and increased exposure to environmental toxins like lead that can affect brain growth and development. Children of color are disproportionately affected by the lack of economic opportunities for their parents and are subsequently more likely to attend high-poverty schools.

Economically disadvantaged students are less likely to achieve in school or be prepared for college, and the disadvantages start early before they even enter school. Students whose families are more economically secure are twice as likely to be proficient on standardized tests for reading and science, and are much more likely to be prepared for college. The impact of poverty in the earliest years, when the brain and language are developing, is particularly destructive, but can be overcome with adequate supports to parents like home visitation programs, two-generational programs that address adult literacy, the early identification and treatment of developmental delays, and high-quality child care and preschool.