

2020 STATE BUDGET PRIORITIES: OVERVIEW OF POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Staying true to its vision that Michigan residents of all races, places and income levels should have the opportunity to thrive and find economic security, the League has identified the following budget priorities for 2020. As a lens for its work on the 2020 budget, the League recommends two overarching priorities:

Focus on Racial and Ethnic Equity: When making state budget decisions, lawmakers should incorporate and make publicly available an analysis of the impact of budget options on children and families of color.

Ensure Adequate State Revenues: State policymakers should review Michigan's taxes and fees to ensure they are fair and bring in adequate revenues to fund state priorities. Tax cuts, especially those that disproportionately benefit wealthy taxpayers, should be opposed.

1. Meet the basic needs of Michigan children, older adults and people with disabilities

Earned Income Tax Credit: To help families keep working and put money back into local economies, modernize the state's Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) to fit the current economy, increase it to its former level of 20% of the federal credit, and expand to allow young childless workers to qualify.

Income Assistance: Improve access to public assistance for vulnerable families and individuals by eliminating the drug felony ban and updating the cash assistance payment standard.

Food Assistance: Reverse the state's decision to apply an asset test to food assistance—a policy that discourages families from saving the small amounts needed to handle temporary crises or setbacks, and has administrative costs for the state.

Healthy Food Deserts: Expand the Double Up Food Bucks and 10 Cents a Meal programs as a way to improve access to healthy food for students in both rural and urban school districts around the state.

2. Make sure all Michiganders have access to needed healthcare

Medicaid and the Healthy Michigan Plan: Protect state and federal funding for Medicaid, the Healthy Michigan Plan and the Children's Health Insurance Program. Should the waiver submitted to the federal government be approved, invest in the services needed to help people comply with the Healthy Michigan Plan work requirements.

Maternal and Child Health: Support programs that help all moms and babies thrive, including expanded funding for home visiting, the creation of a centralized intake system for Michigan's home visiting programs, and restored funding for state family planning and pregnancy prevention services to previous levels.

3. Help working parents find affordable, high-quality child care and early education services

High-Quality Child Care for Parents with Low Wages: Improve access to child care services by: 1) increasing child care payments to providers to ensure that parents can afford 75% of the child care in their community—the federal guideline for affordability; 2) incrementally increasing the income eligibility cutoff for child care to the federal cap of 85% of state median income; and 3) establishing grants and contracts with providers to increase high-quality care in areas of shortage such as infant and toddler care, care for parents working evenings and weekends, and care for children with special needs.

High-Quality Preschool: Provide sufficient funding to ensure that all children from low- and moderate-income families receive a high-quality preschool education.

4. Strengthen public education in Michigan from cradle to career

Early Education: Improve early learning by providing an additional \$20 million in state funding for Early On, the state's early intervention program that identifies and serves very young children with developmental delays and their families.

Third-Grade Reading: Improve third-grade reading by: 1) focusing new resources on districts with the greatest disparities for children of color and those in low-income neighborhoods; 2) tripling the number of well-trained literacy coaches in Michigan's public elementary schools; and 3) adopting new procedures for ensuring that parents are aware of the Reading by Third Grade law and their options for children who aren't reading proficiently.

Students in High-Poverty Schools: 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, district size and geographic isolation.

Adult Education and Access to Postsecondary Programs: Improve educational outcomes by: 1) [increasing adult education funding](#) by \$10 million, to \$36 million, allowing the state to assist nearly 8,000 more students; and 2) [reinstating Part-Time Independent Student Grants](#) that were at one time provided to nontraditional students with low incomes who are more than 10 years out of high school, and providing \$4.7 million for the granting program.