



MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on K-12 and Education

FROM: Gilda Z. Jacobs, President and CEO

SUBJECT: 2020 Budget Recommendations

DATE: April 25, 2019

I am pleased to share the priorities of the Michigan League for Public Policy for the 2020 School Aid and Department of Education budgets. Over the last year, the League listened to hundreds of Michiganders around the state and heard loud and clear that a high-quality education is a critical lever for increasing economic growth and opportunity, while reducing inequities based on race and place.

Fact sheets are attached with additional information related to the League's priorities, which are highlighted below.

- **Help parents with low wages find affordable, high-quality child care.** Although eager to work, many Michigan parents cannot earn enough to pay for high-quality child care. The cost of child care for a parent with two children in a center in Michigan is \$17,561 a year—exceeding the average annual housing costs for a family, and rivaling the cost of college tuition. Yet, child care providers are some of the lowest paid workers in the state, and employers are finding it hard to attract and retain low-wage workers because of the lack of child care. We urge you to increase child care payments to ensure that parents can afford care in their community, and to increase the income eligibility cutoff for child care—now one of the lowest in the nation at 130% of poverty.
- **Expand services for infants and toddlers with disabilities and delays.** Michigan's early intervention program—Early On—has not been adequately funded, resulting in too few young children getting the services they need to improve their chances of getting ready for school. Last year, the Legislature approved the first state funding for Early On of \$5 million, and we thank you for that support. We urge you to provide an additional \$20 million in 2020 as a step toward full funding of just under \$70 million statewide.
- **Provide the resources needed to ensure children can read by third grade.** The promise behind Michigan's Reading by Third Grade law was that there would be adequate and early supports for children and their families to ensure success. We support the Governor's recommendation to triple the number of well-trained literacy coaches in Michigan's public elementary schools, as well as more explicit supports for parents to ensure that they know their options if their children aren't reading proficiently.

(over)

- **Provide more state funding to public schools in high-poverty communities.** The connection between the stresses of poverty and school readiness and achievement are clear. We support full funding for the At-Risk School Aid program, along with a School Aid formula that is weighted by the number of students who are economically disadvantaged.
- **Increase adult education funding.** Entry-level jobs with a career track increasingly require a postsecondary credential, yet many Michigan workers need remediation in one or more basic skills in order to succeed in training that leads to a credential. Adjusted for inflation in 2001 dollars, state funding for adult education has fallen by 71%. We recommend an increase of \$10 million, to total funding of \$36 million, allowing the state to assist nearly 8,000 more students.

We hope the attached information is helpful as you deliberate a budget that touches thousands of Michigan families and children. We look forward to working with you as the budget process proceeds.