

2021 BUDGET PRIORITY: EXPAND SERVICES FOR INFANTS AND TODDLERS WITH DISABILITIES AND DELAYS

LEAGUE RECOMMENDATION:

Increase state funding for Early On, the state’s early intervention program that identifies and serves very young children with developmental delays and their families, with the goal of reaching \$68 million in state funding by 2023.

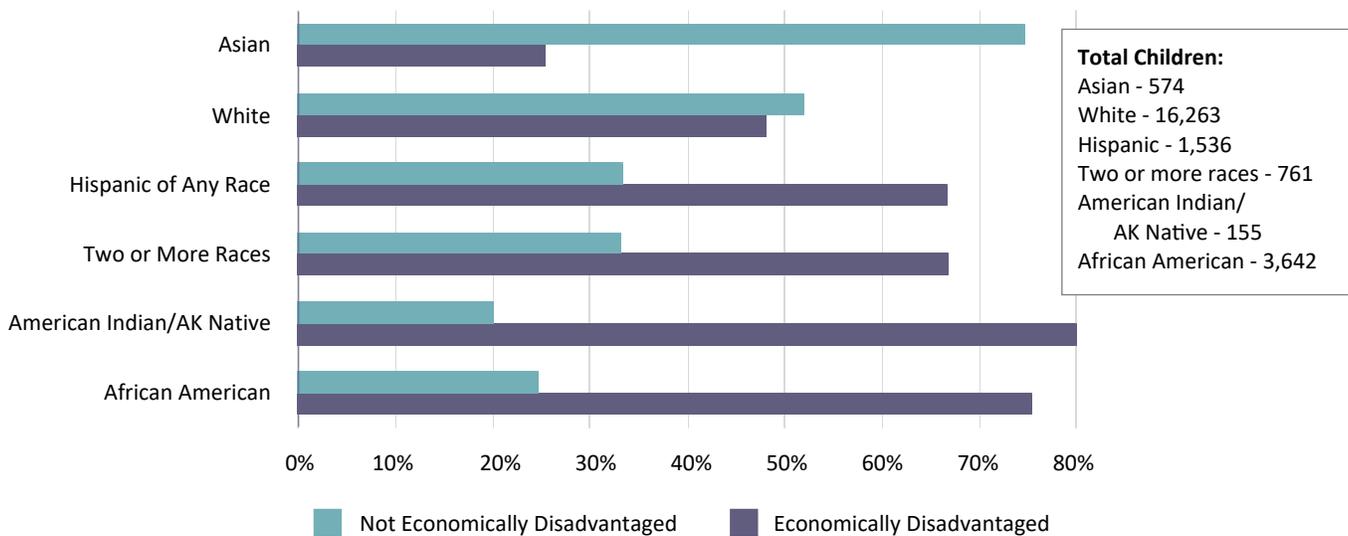
BACKGROUND:

Since passage of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part C program in 1986, Michigan has relied primarily on federal funds for its Early On Program, despite the fact that the federal law expected states to augment that funding to serve young children with developmental delays. In the 2019 budget year, the Legislature approved the first state funding for Early On—a total of \$5 million statewide—with an additional \$2.2 million added in 2020, for total state funding of \$7.2 million. This falls far short of the estimated need of \$68 million to ensure services statewide. Peer states are investing much more, including Pennsylvania (\$126 million) and Minnesota (\$58 million).

To be eligible for Early On, children from birth to age 3 must either: 1) have a developmental delay at least 20% below the mean; or 2) have one of the established medical conditions likely to lead to delays. Early On identifies delays in many areas, including cognitive, language, physical and social-emotional.

A 2013 audit of Michigan’s Early On program concluded that the state had not provided sufficient funding to give young children the services they need delivered by qualified professionals. The audit specifically pointed to the lack of state

Young Children of Color in Early On Are More Likely to Be Economically Disadvantaged Michigan 2018-2019



Source: MI School Data

funding as a impediment to providing the specialized care young children needed such as physical, speech and occupational therapy, nutrition services, health and nursing services, family training and counseling and special instruction. Children who grow up in poverty are more likely to experience developmental delays, and these outcomes are compounded by race/ethnicity. Children of color receiving Early On services are more likely to be economically disadvantaged, and Michigan's failure to fully fund early intervention services is an opportunity missed to reduce the disparities that carry into school.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Brain scientists have demonstrated the importance of early intervention. Scientists have shown that as much as 90% of the architecture of the brain is built in the first 1,000 days of life—affecting a child's development for years to come.

Children whose delays are addressed early in life are more likely to succeed in school. The National Early Intervention Longitudinal Study found that 56% of children receiving early intervention services functioned in the average or above average range for academic skills when they entered kindergarten, and 42% did not need special education services in later years.