

Activate Your Power This Legislative Session: Questions to Ask Your Lawmakers

As we approach a new legislative session, it's important to engage with lawmakers and find out what they think about the issues that matter to you. Think Babies Michigan developed this guide to help you discover your lawmakers' positions on the issues that matter most to Michigan's youngest residents and their families—and if they aren't clear on the issues, we've given you some pointers on what they need to know.

Child Care

What your lawmakers need to know:

- Despite recent increases in income eligibility, the state's subsidy system isn't reaching all eligible families, and the current subsidy system isn't financially feasible for child care providers either.
- State reimbursement rates don't cover the cost of providing care and pay based on attendance, which makes it difficult to accept subsidies and forces providers to turn low- and moderate-income families away or take a loss due to low subsidy payments.
- Finding child care is often difficult for families, in part, because providers struggle with recruiting and retaining staff who are needed to serve at their licensed capacity level. Child care workers are woefully under compensated—often qualifying for public assistance themselves—making it difficult for them to stay and grow in the profession.
- Child care is crucial for families, but it is also crucial to maintain stable businesses and communities. Parents need access to high-quality child care to be able to fill vital roles in the workplace, and given today's economic climate, communities and businesses must work to retain talented individuals.

The Data

- Michigan's subsidy reimbursement rates fall well below the 75th percentile of market rates in the US, 44% below for preschool-ers and 34% below for infants and toddlers.
- Low reimbursement rates disincentivize provider participation. About 41% of providers are currently caring for children with subsidies, and 11% will not serve families receiving subsidies.

The Questions

- **How would you address the issues of child care access and affordability in Michigan?**
- **What would you do to ensure that the child care subsidy program is utilized fully by families and providers?**
- **How would you help grow this critical workforce needed by thousands of Michigan families and make child care an in-demand career path?**



Perinatal Support and Home Visiting

What your lawmakers needs to know:

- Mothers who receive labor support and have birthing options and continuous health coverage see improved outcomes. Babies that are born healthy have a greater likelihood of successfully reaching developmental milestones on time and without intervention.
- The benefits of providing support for mothers and infants before, during and after the birthing experience are well documented—including lowered risk of costly interventions like Cesarean section and increased likelihood of breastfeeding. But due to factors such as race and geography, many moms and babies do not have adequate care in Michigan.
- Home visiting is a successful prevention strategy that supports pregnant people, families, and babies before, during, and after birth up to age 5. Home visiting programs assist families in caring for children, connecting with services, providing developmental screenings, and building strong, healthy relationships. These cost-effective and evidence-based programs lead to improved outcomes.

The Data

- 32% of births in Michigan receive inadequate care.
- In 2020, 9,389 (8.7%) babies were born at low birthweight and 10,922 (10.2%) were preterm.
- More than 6 in 10 pregnancy-related deaths in Michigan are preventable.
- Even after controlling for differences in socioeconomic status, education attainment, health and risk behaviors, Black women experience the highest rates of maternal mortality: over three times that of White women.
- One-third of home visiting programs report waiting lists. Of those, 41% had 10 or more families waiting.

The Questions

- **How would you ensure that moms and babies in Michigan receive high-quality care—regardless of their race, place or income?**
- **What policies do you think will help to reduce racial disparities in prenatal care and birth outcomes?**
- **What would you do to ensure that families with young children are able to access the home visiting supports that best meet their needs in their communities?**

Early On

What your lawmakers need to know:

On-time universal screening allows families to identify and best support children with special needs. *Early On* is Michigan's early intervention system, helping infants and toddlers, birth to age 3 and their families who have developmental delays or are at risk for delays due to certain health conditions. *Early On* services may be in the form of a home visit from an early intervention specialist and is different from home visiting programs outlined above. It recognizes the significant brain development that occurs during a child's first three years of life and seeks early identification and referral to enhance development for infants and toddlers with disabilities.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends 100% of infants and toddlers receive a developmental screening at 9, 18 and 30 months.

The Data

- Just 29% of Michigan children receive a developmental screening.
- Michigan ranks near the bottom—44th in the nation—when it comes to developmental screenings.

The Questions

- **What will you do to ensure that all infants and toddlers have the recommended developmental screenings to ensure early identification of any delays and disabilities?**
- **What will you do to ensure that infants and toddlers experiencing developmental delays and their families get the services they need early in their learning process?**