



Statewide Cross-Sector, Prenatal-to-Three Workforce Strategy: Policy Recommendations for FY24

March 2023

INTRODUCTION

Think Babies Michigan (TBMI) is working to ensure that Michigan is a top state to have and raise a baby. Think Babies is a call to action for policymakers to prioritize the needs of prenatal-to-three children and their families, recognizing they are a key investment in our future. As a part of that strategy, the TBMI Cross-Sector Workforce Workgroup was reconvened to integrate the recommendations of the original Cross-Sector Workforce and Implicit Bias Training workgroups, with the goal of developing further specific policy recommendations about the early childhood workforce. This experienced and passionate workforce supports the growth and development of Michigan's youngest. In this report, the early childhood workforce includes professionals in infant and early childhood mental and physical health, child welfare and social services, early identification and intervention, coaches, trainers, and consultants, and early learning and care providers in homes and centers, both licensed and license exempt. This document was developed by the TBMI Cross-Sector Workforce Workgroup and recommends specific policy opportunities in four areas.

RECOMMENDATION 1: WAGE SCALES

Establish and implement cross-sector wage scales that are aligned with the Comprehensive Fiscal Analysis (CFA) project¹ led by Prenatal-to-Five Fiscal Strategies at the state-level and in Detroit.

Stabilizing and growing the prenatal-to-three workforce is dependent on providing professionals with, at minimum, a living wage that will sustain their own families. Early childhood professionals, particularly those in *Early On*, home visiting, and child care, often cite low wages as the primary reason they leave the field. In fact, over 80% of child care workers left the field due to critically low pay.² Among the early childhood professionals in Michigan who remain in the field, nearly 1 in 5 live in poverty and are eligible for public benefits.³ Establishing competitive cross-sector wage scales will improve retention and recruitment within the field, as well as increase the perceived and real value of the work. Cross-sector wage scales will also minimize competition between early childhood careers. Importantly, providing increased wages to the early childhood workforce must not further burden the workforce or families they serve by raising their costs or reducing benefits.

The Ask

- The State of Michigan establishes an early childhood fund and provides an initial investment beginning in FY24 that is in alignment with the CFA to ensure that early childhood professionals are paid according to the cross-sector wage scale and the CFA.
- The State of Michigan creates a cross-sector wage scale through a multi-year work project that includes those working within the field of early childhood.

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RECOMMENDATION 2: CROSS-SECTOR CAREER LATTICE

In collaboration and alignment with intermediate school districts (ISDs) and higher education institutions, create a cross-sector career lattice to expand professional development opportunities and pathways while ensuring it is designed with adequate support and resources for mobility up and across the field.

The early childhood workforce consistently reports challenges with accessing professional development opportunities and moving upward and to other areas in the field. Little opportunity for advancement is another leading reason for the exodus of the early childhood workforce, despite there being ample opportunities elsewhere in the field. Michigan's home visiting programs, for example, have waitlists for families seeking necessary services;⁴ teachers and caregivers looking to advance may help fill such a gap. Michigan can leverage the career lattice already developed by Hope Starts Here and the Corporation for a Skilled Workforce, along with the current career pathway in MiRegistry. In addition, collaboration with ISDs and higher education will help generate desperately needed diversity within the field. This career lattice will empower those in the field and entice those still deciding due to the career pathway opportunities in early childhood.

The Ask

- The State of Michigan invests funds in alignment with the CFA toward current professional development structures, including MiRegistry, EOTTA, and Infant Mental Health, to support the early childhood workforce by facilitating the expansion of programming and professional development opportunities.
- The State of Michigan invests funds into a multi-year work project that includes direct service providers to create a cross-sector career lattice and implementation plan.
- The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) broadens the requirements for scholarship programs, such as the Teacher Education and Compensation Helps (T.E.A.C.H.) Early Childhood[®] Michigan Scholarship Program, to increase the pathways to fund higher education and integrate the field across sectors.
- Higher education institutions provide flexibility in apprenticeship programs and with practicum requirements, while also offering students opportunities to gain entrepreneurial and business ownership skills, which are often necessary for movement, particularly in home visiting and child care.
- MDE expands the Future Proud MI Educator program to include the early childhood field.

RECOMMENDATION 3: OUTREACH & EDUCATION

Conduct a public awareness campaign, coordinated by public and private entities, to elevate the value of the early childhood workforce and support recruitment efforts.

Early childhood professionals provide the foundation for children's success and wellbeing, which will later influence Michigan's future. Creating a multi-faceted, strengths-based awareness campaign will elevate the early childhood field and best outcomes for children and families. The campaign

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must address service stigmas, champion the benefits of early childhood careers, highlight impacts of the prenatal-to-three workforce on the development of the child, and emphasize the economic value that the field provides to every community. It will also be critical to outline the return on investment that people and communities will experience when early childhood services are fully funded and utilized. Existing campaigns, such as the Week of the Young Child, Celebrate Babies, and Power to the Profession should be leveraged to maintain consistent communications and build on promotion of individual sectors. Finally, the campaign should utilize parent connections, as they can provide outreach as education.

The Ask

- The State of Michigan invests in a multi-year awareness campaign between both public and private entities statewide to increase the literal and figurative value attached to the prenatal-to-three workforce. Sharing Our Stories & Voices for Early Intervention are two campaigns that can be expanded to include other early childhood sectors.

RECOMMENDATION 4: IMPLICIT BIAS TRAINING

Build on the state government efforts to require implicit bias training for licensed health care workers through implementation of this requirement for those in the early childhood workforce.

Increasing personal awareness of and responses to unconscious biases is a critical first step to ensuring equity within the field of early childhood. To achieve this, implicit bias training must be required for those working in the field and funding must be made available to facilitate full participation. In addition, to improve accessibility, this requirement should be captured through multiple licensing systems whenever possible.

The Ask

- The Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA) expands the implicit bias training requirement to include child care providers and makes these trainings progressive in mastery.
- All state agencies require implicit bias training in their grant contracts.
- MDE adds State Continuing Education Clock Hours related to implicit bias into MiRegistry.
- *Early On* Michigan updates personnel standards to include ongoing, required implicit bias training.
- Michigan's Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS), LARA, MDE, and other appropriate public agencies utilize MiRegistry to offer yearly progressive implicit bias training and expands its offerings to the entire early childhood workforce.
- MDHHS, LARA, MDE, and other appropriate public agencies collaborate to establish a team of qualified professionals who can identify and/or deliver suitable implicit bias trainings.
- All required implicit bias training courses are fully funded, and staff are fully compensated for their training time.

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Think Babies Michigan Cross-Sector Workforce Workgroup Members

Denise Smith, Co-Chair	Hope Starts Here	Cara Sutcliffe, Co-Chair	Parent Leader
Tammy Arakelian	Oakland ISD	Mary Ludtke	Michigan Department of Health & Human Services
Julie Bash	Saginaw ISD	Karla Mancini	Child Care Network
Sherry Bennett	Van Buren GSC	Salina Mann	Parent Leader
Angie Bruning	Alpena-Montmorency-Alcona GSC	Michelle Nicholson	Ingham ISD
Christy Callahan	<i>Early On</i> Foundation	Gretchen Preston	Gretchen's House Inc.
Blair Cole	Parent Leader	Oriana Powell	Mothering Justice
Joni Detwiler	MDHHS Maternal Infant Health Program (MIHP)	Annette Sobocinski	Child Care Network
Kimberly Diamond-Berry	Michigan Association for Infant Mental Health	Kristen Sobolewski	First Steps Kent
Maddie Elliott	Michigan's Children	Ericka Taylor	Saginaw ISD
Jaimie Estep	Parent Leader	Natisha Thompson	Parent Leader
Michelle Freund	University of Michigan Children's Center	Elisabeth Tobia	Tobia Weston Consulting
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Nate Henschel	Grand Rapids Chamber	Monique Vasquez	Parent Leader
Robin Hornkohl	Eastern Upper Peninsula ISD	Marlene White	Henry Ford College
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Alexa Kramer	Small Business Association of Michigan	Cynthia Zagar	Michigan Public Health Institute
Nealmetria Loper	Parent Leader		

¹ Michigan Cost of Quality Study, Prenatal to 5 Fiscal Strategies. Accessed December 9, 2022:

<https://www.prenatal5fiscal.org/michigan>

² National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). "Progress and Peril:

Child Care at a Crossroads," July 2021. Accessed December 9, 2022:

https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/resources/blog/naeyc_july_2021_survey_progressperil_final.pdf

³ Sorenson, P., Michigan League for Public Policy. "Confronting Michigan's Early Childhood Workforce Crisis." (January 2022). Accessed December 9, 2022: <https://mlpp.org/confronting-michigans-early-childhood-workforce-crisis/>

⁴ Michigan Home Visiting Needs Assessment 2020, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services Early Childhood Home Visiting Unit and the Michigan Public Health Institute Center for Healthy Communities. Accessed December 9, 2022: https://www.michigan.gov/-/media/Project/Websites/mdhhs/Folder4/Folder19/Folder3/Folder119/Folder2/Folder219/Folder1/Folder319/Michigan_Home_Visiting_Needs_Assessment_FY20.pdf?rev=d2b373b3d5c447daaed397a8e819c421

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