



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Gov. Whitmer Announces Investment to Address Early Learning Workforce Shortage and Expand Access to Child Care for Working Families

LANSING, Mich. — Today, Governor Gretchen Whitmer announced 12 recipients of Early Care and Education (ECE) Registered Apprenticeships from the Early Childhood Investment Corporation's (ECIC) Child Care Innovation Fund. All 12 recipients will help finance, provide educational support, and increase compensation for Michiganders who want to become early childhood educators in 65 counties across Michigan.

"Access to quality, affordable early learning opportunities sets kids up for long-term success," said **Governor Whitmer**. "Today's investment in apprenticeships will create more paths for Michiganders to become skilled, qualified early education professionals and help us meet our statewide goal of opening or expanding 1,000 child care programs by the end of 2024. We are already well on track, with nearly 800 programs opened, and with today's investment we will continue taking action to help aspiring education professionals and our kids 'make it' in Michigan."

The investment for ECE Registered Apprenticeship grantees is part of the \$12.9 million in federal American Rescue Plan Act funding awarded by the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) as part of the Caring for MI Future initiative, a \$100 million investment to open 1,000 new, or expanded, child care programs by the end of 2024.

The recipients of the ECE Registered Apprenticeships are as follows:

- Capital Area Michigan Works! - \$120,000
- Child Care Network - \$230,000
- Great Lakes Bay Michigan Works! - \$120,000
- GST Michigan Works! - \$229,000
- Macomb St. Clair Michigan Works! - \$120,000
- Michigan Works! Region 7B - \$230,000
- Michigan Works! Northeast Consortium - \$120,000
- Michigan Works! West Central - \$120,000
- Networks Northwest - \$230,000
- Oakland County Michigan Works! - \$120,000
- West Michigan Works! - \$120,000
- Upper Peninsula Michigan Works! - \$230,000

“We recognize the vital role that highly skilled child care providers play in supporting working families across the state,” said **Michigan Works! Association CEO, Ryan Hundt**. “This dynamic partnership between the Early Childhood Investment Corporation and Michigan Works! underscores our commitment to fostering high quality child care and driving economic growth hand-in-hand.”

“Child care programs across Michigan have had to close classrooms and place families on waitlists due to the workforce shortage of early educators,” said **Dawne Bell, CEO of the Early Childhood Investment Corporation**. “Apprenticeships are a key workforce solution for many industries, and now, thanks to this partnership with the MI Dept. of Education, the MI Dept. of Labor and Economic Opportunity, and MI Works!, apprenticeships will help build a new workforce pipeline to educate Michigan’s youngest learners.”

Michigan’s early childhood educators are facing several barriers to becoming highly skilled, making it difficult for child care employers to recruit and retain staff, contributing to a cycle of workforce shortages in the early childhood field, essential to Michigan’s economy. The formula is simple; without sufficient child care available, Michigan’s families simply cannot get to work. ECIC and MI Works! have partnered to launch and expand 12 Registered ECE Apprenticeships throughout Michigan. This partnership highlights the needs for sustainable funding for credentialing/degrees and to raise the wages for those newly acquired skills to incentivize more educators to become highly skilled. Recipients of the ECE Registered Apprenticeship investment will lift the burden off child care employers by assessing the needs and resources of the business, designing a program, and working with the employer to identify employees for additional support and training.

Early Childhood Investment Corporation (ECIC)

Created in 2005 to serve as a statewide leader in early childhood, ECIC collaborates to increase public and private investment in the earliest years, elevate issues affecting young children and their families, and continuously improve Michigan’s comprehensive early childhood system. Our aim is to create a future where all young children in Michigan and their families thrive. To learn more about ECIC and the Child Care Innovation Fund, please visit ecic4kids.org.

About Caring for MI Future

Caring for MI Future is a statewide effort to help child care entrepreneurs open new or expand existing child care programs. In May 2022, Governor Whitmer and Lieutenant Governor Gilchrist set a bold goal to open 1,000 new child care providers by the end of 2024. At the same time, they announced Caring for MI Future—statewide effort to help child care entrepreneurs open new or expand existing child care programs.

With the Michigan Departments of Education and Licensing and Regulatory Affairs, the state invested \$100M million in federal Child Care Development Block Grant funds, managed and overseen by the Michigan Department of Education, to improve access to affordable child care options and create sustainable systems to support the current and next generation of child care business owners.

Through Caring for MI Future, entrepreneurs have access to resources to launch and expand their businesses. Entrepreneurs can learn more at Michigan.gov/caringformifuture and contact an Our Strong Start Navigator to learn which resources are the right fit for their goals. To date, providers in nearly every county of the state have participated in Caring for MI Future, including:

- **Our Strong Start (OSS):** LARA's team of navigators continue to support entrepreneurs as they establish or expand their business. LARA's team has helped all 796 new facilities and 1,927 expanded facilities with a variety of assistance including developing business plans, accessing grant funding, and navigating the licensing process. Our Strong Start has received 11,432 unique visitors to our website and have worked with 2,944 child care entrepreneurs.
- **Facility improvement grants:** The state has awarded \$21.4 million towards 1,719 facility improvement grants in 67 counties. An additional, 1,780 applications are submitted and being reviewed. These funds are available to help entrepreneurs renovate facilities.
- **Startup funding:** The state is supporting entrepreneurs before and after receiving their child care license, including:
 - 1,301 pre-licensure grants
 - 285 start-up grants (available after receiving their license)
- **Business development tools:** Since May 2022, over 2,500 child care entrepreneurs have participated in professional development to strengthen their business plan and set their program up for success, including 1:1 consultations, trainings, webinars, workshops, and communities of practice.
- **Support recruiting and developing staff:** Forty-two counties are engaging in workforce efforts to recruit, train, and retain talented early educators to live and work in their communities with grant funding from Caring for MI Future.

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