



EARLY ON COALITION: FY2027 BUDGET ASK

What is Early On: Michigan's early intervention program mandated through the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Part C, *Early On* provides services to all eligible families with infants and toddlers who have a developmental delay or a disability/medical condition that may result in a delay. Administered through Intermediate School Districts (ISDs), *Early On* professionals partner with families and caregivers to teach them skills to support their child's unique developmental needs. While Michigan serves 4.4% of children ages birth to three through *Early On*, federal data indicates that 15% of children have a developmental delay or disability that would make them eligible.ⁱ This means thousands of babies may be missing out on crucial services during a period when development matters most.

The *Early On* Coalition is requesting a **\$5 million increase to Section 54d in the School Aid budget in FY2027** for ISDs to bolster underfunded *Early On* services that are required for families with eligible infants and toddlers. **These services are critical to families.**

A Key Piece of the Literacy Puzzle: *Early On* is critical for the State to significantly impact early literacy development. In *Early On* Michigan, 60% of children are eligible due to a communication delay, and research shows that toddlers with delayed language development are more likely to struggle with key literacy indicators in adolescence.^{ii,iii} Because early language is foundational to literacy development, ensuring early intervention for speech and language delays is imperative for future literacy success.

The Funding Gap and Its Real Impacts: In 2023, a cost study commissioned by the Michigan Department of Education found that *Early On* is funded at a fraction of the cost to implement a high-quality early intervention system.^{iv} Across the country, the average per child state investment for Early Intervention services ranges from less than \$2,000 to over \$4,000; yet Michigan allocates only \$879 per child under section 54d in the School Aid budget.^v State funding for *Early On* has been insufficient to keep pace with inflation and cost of living, let alone the investments needed to adequately fund the system.

Since the pandemic, Michigan has seen a steady uptake in the number of young children eligible for *Early On* services. Relatively stagnant funding for *Early On* has been insufficient to provide adequate services or staffing, though referrals, evaluations, and caseloads have risen. In fact, flat funding in FY2026 forced some ISDs to make difficult staffing reductions due to rising costs.

The Ask: A \$5 million *Early On* funding increase in FY2027 would help service capacity shortages, support more children with early literacy foundations, and ensure families with eligible babies and toddlers receive the services they need for optimal development.

Prior *Early On* funding increases have made a difference for ISDs. As one ISD early childhood leader shared: "...our percent served has increased, our percent of families who drop out or withdraw early has decreased. These funds have been a game changer for the children and families in our communities." In short, increased investment in *Early On* would help Michigan continue to move towards a more adequately funded early intervention system.

Learn more about Michigan's Early On Coalition at www.ecic4kids.org/michigan-early-on-coalition.

ⁱ Boyle CA, Boulet S, Schieve LA, Cohen RA, Blumberg SJ, Yeargin-Allsopp M, et al. Trends in the prevalence of developmental disabilities in US children, 1997-2008. *Pediatrics*. 2011;127:1034-42. doi: 10.1542/peds.2010-2989.

ⁱⁱ Source: <https://earlyondata.com/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Rescorla, L. Age 13 language and reading outcomes in late-talking toddlers. *J Speech Lang Hear Res*. 2005 Apr;48(2):459-72. doi: 10.1044/1092-4388(2005/031).

^{iv} Source: <https://www.michigan.gov/mileap/-/media/Project/Websites/mileap/Documents/Early-Childhood-Education/earlyon/EarlyOnCostStudyReport-508-NEW.pdf>

^v Source: <https://ccf.georgetown.edu/2025/03/07/medicaid-provides-early-intervention-for-infants-and-toddlers-with-disabilities-and-developmental-delays/#7e879cc8-b335-4841-8222-ac5a55027085>