

**State Funds are Improving Early On®**  
**Continued Investment is Needed**

*Early On*® is Michigan’s early intervention system responsible for implementing the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part C, for families of infants and toddlers with moderate delays to significant disabilities. With the creation of Section 54d in the State School Aid budget in fiscal year (FY) 2018-2019, Michigan invested statewide in *Early On* for the first time. Since FY2019, Michigan has seen small increases to Section 54d, with the FY2022 budget including a total allocation of \$21.25 million.

Though funding for *Early On* continues to fall short of the statewide need (it is estimated that a \$73 million statewide annual investment is needed to fully fund *Early On*), the increased investment has already positively impacted families. A voluntary survey of Intermediate School Districts (ISDs) in October 2022 found that all 40 ISDs who responded reported either increasing the frequency of *Early On* services and/or hiring more qualified staff to perform evaluations and provide additional services to ensure families are connected to the support they need. As some ISDs noted:

- “54d has allowed us to make better decisions based on need for services rather than fitting services into limited budgets. We have been able to assign staff to families and set frequencies and length of visit time based on need and family preference.” - Dickinson-Iron ISD
- “These funds have not only provided additional staff who are special education certified but also have reduced the average caseload size (It was 150 PER provider prior to 54D), increased the frequency of services, and reduced the amount of time that Part C Only children needing a special education evaluation wait for MMSE determination. Our special education eligibility percentage has increased, our percent served 0-3 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.” - Oakland Schools
- “This funding is critical to providing families in my community with high-quality services by Special Education certified personnel! Without it, I would not be able to provide families with access to the service providers they need.” - Livingston ESA

*I am not sure Nye would have made the progress that she did without Early On’s help. To see this beautiful little girl blossom has been nothing short of a miracle in my eyes.*

-Tom and Mary  
Holbrook, Ottawa Area  
ISD

While the increased investments for *Early On* have resulted in more frequent and higher quality services to better meet families’ and children’s needs, Michigan continues to fall short. Many families continue to struggle with supporting their children’s development, which has only been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, Michigan is seeing record high referrals to *Early On*, and the need for more qualified staff to evaluate and serve young children has never been more pressing. As Kalamazoo RESA put it, “Incremental monies are helpful but not as much when it doesn't provide substantial FTE.” In FY2024, Michigan must continue to increase state funds for section 54d – by doubling the state investment to \$42M – to continue to improve the *Early On* system and subsequently, improve services for families and their young children.