

June 24, 2009



Dear Governor Granholm, Speaker of the House Dillon and Senate Majority Leader Bishop:

Michigan is home to one of the highest quality pre-kindergarten programs in the country – a program that has been a source of pride for the state and a powerful tool to build Michigan’s human capital. We urge you to be a strong advocate for the children of Michigan and the future of your state’s economy, and to publicly oppose short-sighted cuts to early education.

As lawmakers debate the elimination of the state’s \$100 million investment in pre-k, the eyes of the nation are on Michigan. Other states are watching to see how a state hard-hit by the financial crisis will treat its children – the foundation of its economic recovery. In the face of one of the worst recessions Michigan has seen, the state cannot afford to cut early education, which has been proven to put children on a path to academic success, increase the likelihood of graduating from high school, reduce the cost of remediation and special education and boost lifetime earnings. If Michigan hopes to have a stronger economy tomorrow, it must protect its early childhood investments today.

Pre-K Now, a campaign of the Pew Center on the States, collaborates with advocates and policymakers to lead a movement toward high-quality, voluntary pre-kindergarten for all three and four year olds, and we are concerned with the future of early education in Michigan. When states are faced with dwindling revenues, strong leaders must make tough choices. When making these choices, policymakers should take into account which programs provide the greatest return on investment. Data shows that a dollar invested in high-quality pre-k returns up to seven dollars to taxpayers, a figure unmatched by most other government expenditures.

The current Senate proposal to eliminate funding for Michigan’s smartest investment is at best short-sighted and at worst catastrophic for the children and working families of Michigan. Currently, eleven percent of Michigan kindergarteners repeat their first year in school, costing the state over \$100 million dollars each year. This alarming statistic will no doubt balloon if 30,000 children are dropped from the high-quality early education programs they need to succeed in school and life.

More than forty years ago, an experiment from Ypsilanti showed the world how much impact high-quality early education can have on children, families, communities and the economy. Michigan is, in many ways, the birthplace of our nation’s early childhood movement and the Senate’s budget threatens to tarnish this history. Please be bold in your defense of education for your state’s youngest citizens.

Please let us know if we can be of any assistance by contacting Pre-K Now State Policy Associate Allison de la Torre ([adelatorre@pewtrusts.org](mailto:adelatorre@pewtrusts.org)) or me directly. Thank you for your leadership, and we look forward to hearing good news from Michigan in the near future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Libby Doggett'.

Libby Doggett  
Deputy Director, Pew Center on the States

CC: The Michigan State Legislature