

2019 BUDGET PRIORITIES

Staying true to its vision that Michigan residents of *all* races, places and income levels should have the opportunity to thrive and find economic security, the League has identified the following budget priorities for 2019:

1. Meet the basic needs of Michigan children, older adults and persons with disabilities

- **Income Assistance:** Increase the annual clothing allowance for children in families receiving income assistance through the Family Independence Program and living below the poverty line.
- **Food Assistance:** 1) Preserve the “heat and eat” policy that increases food assistance to 340,000 Michigan residents; and 2) Reverse the state’s decision to apply an asset test to food assistance, a move that discourages families with low incomes from saving the small amount of money needed to handle a family setback or crisis, and has administrative costs to the state.
- **Healthy Food Deserts:** Increase investments in programs that reduce the number of “healthy food deserts” such as the Corner Store Initiative, the Double Up Food Bucks program and initiatives to expand healthy food access for child care providers.

2. Make sure all Michiganders have access to needed healthcare

- **Medicaid and the Healthy Michigan Plan:** Defend state and federal funding for Medicaid, the Healthy Michigan Plan and the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP).
- **Healthy Pregnancies and Births:** Fund initiatives to prevent prenatal smoking. State dollars for programs to reduce prenatal smoking have been reduced significantly while almost 1 in 5 births in Michigan is to a mother who smoked during her pregnancy.

3. Help working parents find affordable, high-quality child care and early education services

- **Eligibility for Child Care Assistance:** Incrementally increase the state’s very low income eligibility thresholds to help make high-quality child care a reality for all families—with a focus on parents with low wages for whom the cost of care is prohibitive.
- **Access to Adequate Supply of High-Quality Child Care:** Support small child care businesses so they can accept more children with state subsidies by moving from hourly payments to weekly or biweekly—a standard encouraged by federal law and a practice in most other states.
- **Expand Access to High-Quality Preschool:** Provide sufficient funding to ensure that all eligible 4-year-olds can receive a high-quality preschool education through the Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP), and expand GSRP services to 3-year-olds from families with low incomes.

4. Strengthen public education in Michigan—beginning early

- **Early Literacy:** Michigan must: 1) Provide state funding for the Early On Program that identifies and serves very young children with developmental delays and disabilities; 2) Expand funding for evidence-based home visitation programs that help pregnant women and families with young children address the challenges faced as new parents—programs that have proven to increase financial security, reduce child abuse and neglect, and improve health and educational outcomes; and 3) Fund comprehensive programs for children from birth through third grade to improve reading proficiency, including resources needed by schools to implement the new third-grade reading law, and

outreach to families to understand the state’s retention policy—which could disproportionately affect children of color.

- **Students in High-Poverty Schools:** The School Aid At-Risk program is the state’s best vehicle for helping students in high-poverty schools and must be fully funded.
- **Adult Education and Access to Postsecondary Programs:**
 - Expand funding for adult education programs, which has been cut by 70% despite strong need.
 - Reinstating Part-Time Independent Student Grants that were at one time provided to nontraditional students who are more than 10 years out of high school.

5. Strengthen immigrant integration in Michigan. Create a \$5 million immigrant integration fund to ensure the social and civic integration of immigrant residents through community-based language programs and citizenship classes. English language proficiency and citizenship are important keys to economic mobility and have a positive ripple effect on our state economy.

6. Provide appropriate justice for juveniles. Fund implementation of “Raise the Age” legislation to ensure that 17-year-old youths are not treated as adults in the criminal justice system. Michigan is one of five states that automatically charges 17-year-old youths as adults.