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News from [Michigan Education Justice Coalition](#)

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Coalition Launches “Invest in MI Kids” Ballot Initiative to Fund Michigan’s Public Schools

LANSING, MI — Michiganders, across our races, places, and backgrounds, know that our kids are the future. They deserve an education that prepares them to be the next generation of leaders in our communities. And yet, legislators of the past have left Michigan schools underfunded for decades, resulting in falling education achievement levels, crumbling facilities, and a teacher shortage crisis. Today, a diverse coalition of educators, labor leaders, and community organizers launched a bold ballot initiative to fund public K-12 schools across the state. The ‘**Invest in MI Kids**’ initiative will change the state constitution to create a fair share surcharge for the wealthiest Michiganders, generating nearly **\$1.7 billion annually in additional revenue for public K-12 schools** across the state.

Education is the cornerstone of our democracy and every child deserves a strong, well-funded, healing public school where they can thrive in the classroom and beyond. Yet Michigan ranks 49th out of all 50 states for growth in education funding since 2012. High student to counselor ratios, oversized classes, and no state funding for facilities have left districts struggling to make ends meet - and the students paying the price.

The ‘**Invest in MI Kids**’ ballot initiative would ensure that individuals earning over \$500,000 and couples earning over \$1 million pay a surcharge of 5% of their income in state taxes. Currently, Michigan has a flat income tax rate of 4.25%, which means billionaires and teachers pay the same rate. This initiative would raise about \$1.7 billion in extra school funding revenue annually. Imagine what we could do with this extra funding: expansions in career and technical education, paying teachers and school staff higher wages to keep them in the profession, providing more mental health resources, fully meeting the needs of special education students, and more.

“Michigan’s flat tax system was designed for the ultra-wealthy, not working families,” said Molly Sweeney, Organizing Director of **482 Forward**, a founding coalition partner. “That’s why we’re coming together to rewrite the rules so those who aren’t paying what they owe in taxes finally chip in to support the services we all rely on—especially public education.”

Michigan schools are underfunded by an estimated **\$4 to \$5 billion annually**. This measure would direct new, much-needed revenue to the School Aid Fund and allow new funding for

areas like career and technical education, attracting and retaining teachers, and reducing class sizes especially in underserved communities.

“This is about fairness, plain and simple,” said Charlie Cavell, organizer with **Fund MI Future**. “When you include sales tax and other taxes, working and middle-class families in Michigan actually pay a *higher* percentage of their income in state taxes than the top 1%. That’s upside-down. Our ballot initiative will restore balance and ensure that those at the very top finally contribute to our schools and communities like the rest of us already do.”

The campaign is backed by a broad alliance, including **Michigan Education Justice Coalition**, and dozens of grassroots partners representing constituents from across the state, from Grand Rapids to Onaway to Pontiac.

“We know that for years Michigan schools have been underfunded and students are feeling forgotten and unheard,” said Christina Yarn, a Senior at Heritage High School in Saginaw MI, and a member of the **Michigan Education Justice Coalition’s** Youth Collective. “We have been suffering in schools that are falling apart, with little to no school transportation, schools that have poor water and air quality, where students aren’t safe in their own classes.”

And Shauda Islam, another MEJC Youth Collective member, thinks this ballot initiative is an opportunity to invest in students like herself. “A fully funded school system can help students in need, and we’re organizing to make sure this funding reaches the classrooms where it’s needed most,” she added.

Inspired by recent victories in other states, the coalition aims to collect **600,000 signatures** to place the amendment on the **2026 statewide ballot**. The Invest in MI Kids initiative will help ensure every Michigan student has access to a high-quality, well-resourced public education no matter their income, zip code, or background.

Michiganders who are interested in learning more about this initiative can visit InvestInMIkids.com to learn more.

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