

*****PRESS RELEASE*****

**Education Funding Press Conference at Capitol Steps
to Raise Awareness for 2024 K-12 Budget Demands**

*Michigan Education Justice Coalition stands with Lawmakers, Parents, Students and Educators
to Call on State to Fully Fund Our Schools*

Parents, students and community members from all across Michigan hosted a [Press Conference](#) at the Michigan State Capitol East Steps. This event was the culmination of the [Michigan Education Justice Coalition](#) (MEJC) Advocacy Day to raise awareness of the state's education funding gap and to call on legislators to pass the network's [budget recommendations](#).

Michigan schools have been systemically underfunded for decades. Despite recent gains to investments in education, our schools still have a [\\$4.5 billion education funding gap](#). "Although we have increased funding significantly for Michigan students, we in the legislature need to do everything in our power to make sure that we are fully funding our schools and investing in a way that is equitable so that students who need more, get more. It's the reason I ran to be in this office." said Representative Regina Weiss, former Detroit public school teacher, as she encouraged her fellow legislators to fully fund education.

Dylan Wegela, State Representative from Garden City, said: "Today we are calling on the Legislature to invest in our future by passing legislation that would raise \$4.5 Billion for public schools. We live in a time of extreme wealth inequality, and education is one of the great equalizers. It's time to give kids the schools they deserve and make the millionaire and billionaire class pay their fair share."

"Black and Brown students in particular have been harmed from decades of under-investment in their districts and communities. Michigan must continue to take bold steps for an equitable education for its students. We must invest in the Mi Black Student Project and replace the pipeline to prison with a pipeline to prosperity starting with the solutions of Michigan's Majority Black Cities and School Districts. How long do our students have to wait for equity?" asks Benton Harbor School Board member Elnora Gavin.

High school student Jason Dyer experienced homelessness until he was in 8th grade. "No school I went to had the resources, funding, or support to help any student going through this situation. Our classrooms are set up like prison cells. It looks like my school is literally built to be a pipeline to prison. Of course that is going to affect the mental health of the students as well as the teachers."

Michigan Education Justice Coalition has the recipe for success - a world-class education *with fully funded schools for all kids across Michigan that ensures the needs of our youth are met*, regardless of their color, background, or neighborhood. The recipe is simple; start with high

quality ingredients by listening to those in the classroom - students and teachers and staff. Uplift the voices of families and communities to make our schools a place where students thrive. Add in strong investments in special education, mental health, transportation, and facilities. Mix together investing in recruiting and retaining teachers, especially Black and Brown educators. And bake in funding for all Michigan schools, especially those with concentrated poverty.

Arlyssa Heard from 482 Forward states: "We don't need politics in education. What we need is good solid investments and people who believe that our children are worth investing in. When we join together across the state to demand these improvements, we can make them a reality! We need to make a pie big enough for all Michigan children. We need to show our students that they are loved by fully funding our schools."

Benton Harbor student Samyah Crenshaw asks legislators to invest in community schools: "Students are hard-working, determined, and deserving of every opportunity other schools have and I feel our school should reflect that inside and out."

"We need to invest in curriculum that actually teaches reading and support teachers so that they can continue to do what they do best, and that's educating our kids." said Dearborn Education Association President, Kathi Martin.

"There are not enough resources for English Language Learners. We need to double the amount of funding to \$80 million so that all students can learn English and move forward," said Detroit parent Fabiola Venegas.

A delegation of community leaders, parents, and students then hand delivered baked goods to encourage Governor Whitmer, Leader Tate, Leader Brinks, Senator Camilleri, Senator Anthony, Representative Weiss and Representative Witwer to grow the education pie and raise \$4.5 billion in new revenue by [enacting these measures](#) for public schools in Michigan.

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The [Michigan Education Justice Coalition](#) is a statewide network committed to advocating for equitable public education policies and funding to create safe and healthy learning environments. We envision a Michigan where public schools get the support they need, strengthening communities and making them better places to live for all of us.