

# The Importance of Investing in *Early On*<sup>®</sup> in the State of Michigan

*Testimony to the House Appropriations Subcommittee  
on School Aid and Education*

March 14, 2024



Michigan's  
*Children*

# Early Childhood Lens

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- 80% of a Child's Brain Develops by the Age of Three
- Critical Time for Growth & Development
- Support is Essential for Positive Outcomes

# Nicole Hamp, MD, MPA, FAAP

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- Developmental Behavioral Pediatrician
- Medical Director, Arbor Autism Centers
- Adjunct Clinical Assistant Professor, University of Michigan Medical School
  
- Autism Alliance of Michigan, Board Member
- *Early On* Michigan Foundation, Board Member
- American Academy of Pediatrics Council on Early Childhood, State Liaison
  
- House District 23

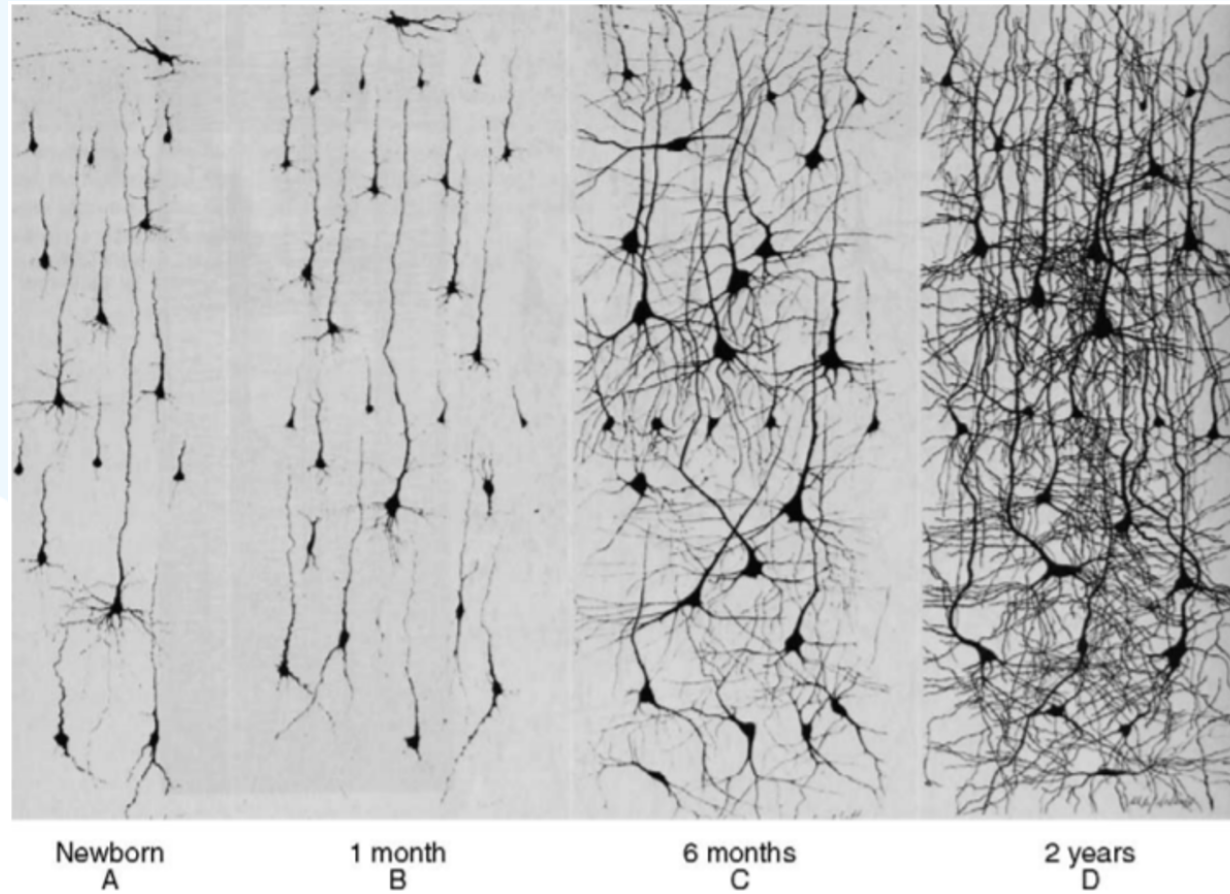
# Developmental Delay and Disability in the U.S.

In the U.S., about 1 in 6 children have a developmental disability.



**1 IN 36**  
HAVE AUTISM  
SPECTRUM  
DISORDER

# Brain Development



# Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

## Supporting Young Children with Disabilities Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

### Early Intervention

Birth through Two Years Old  
IDEA Part C

### Early Childhood Special Education

Three through Five Years Old  
IDEA Part B Section 619

### Special Education

Five through 21 Years Old  
IDEA Part B



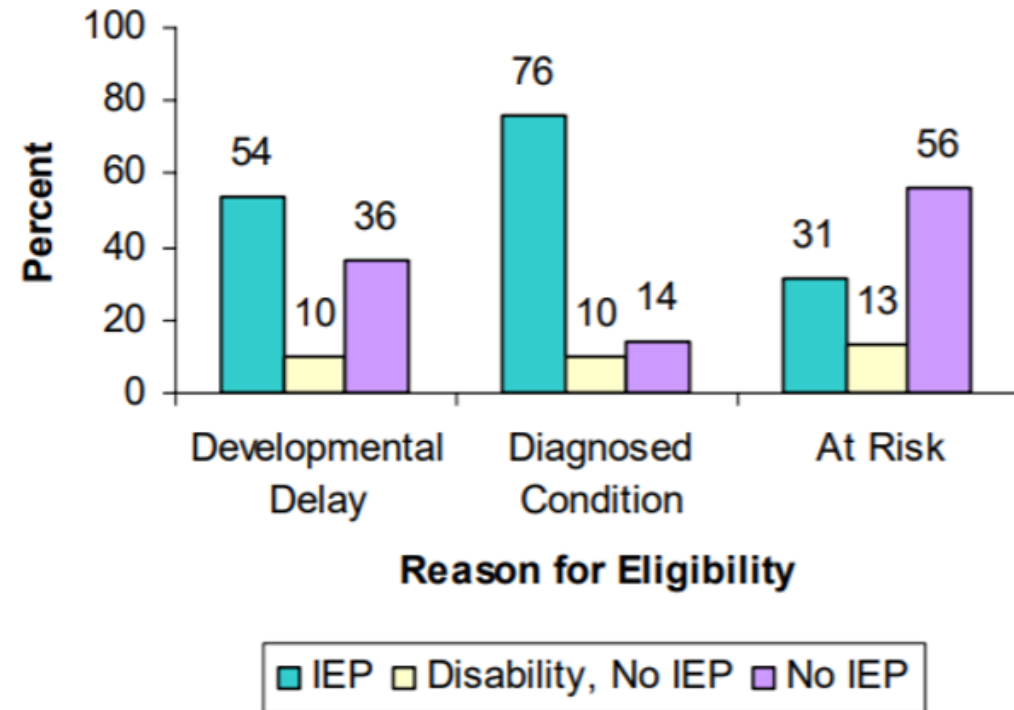
*This graphic shows the way in which we conceptualize IDEA for the purposes of this blog series. Age ranges and terminology may differ slightly in different states and circumstances.*

# Early Intervention Improves Outcomes

## Infants and toddlers in EI experience:

- Increased motor, social and cognitive functioning;
  - Improved acquisition of age appropriate skills;
  - Reduced negative impacts of their disabilities.
- 
- 54% of children who received EI exited functioning *at, or above, age level in overall academic skills*
  - Most of the children (69%) who were eligible for EI because of a risk condition were *not enrolled in special education* at kindergarten
  - 46% of children who had received EI for developmental delay were *not enrolled in special education* at kindergarten

**RECEIPT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND DISABILITY STATUS OF FORMER EI PARTICIPANTS AT KINDERGARTEN, BY REASON FOR ELIGIBILITY**



# Cost Efficiency

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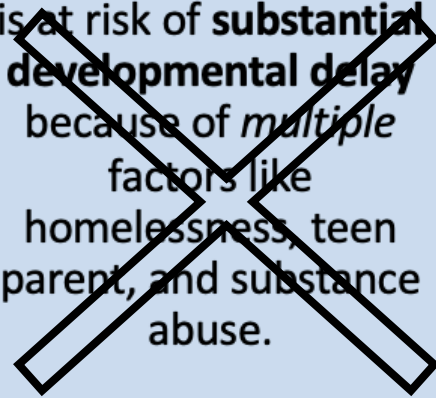
- For every dollar spent, intervening early can save up to \$17 in future costs
- Early intervention services are 2.5x less costly than special education services in preschool and elementary years
- Michigan contributed NO STATE FUNDING to *Early On* until 2018



# Early Intervention Eligibility

## Children from birth to age 3 plus:

- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <p>1.<br/>is experiencing a <b>medically diagnosed physical or mental condition</b> that typically results in developmental delay like Down Syndrome, Cerebral Palsy or Rett syndrome;<br/>OR</p> | <p>2.<br/>is <b>experiencing a delay (20% or greater)</b> in one or more of the following areas: cognitive, physical, social-emotional, communication, or adaptive; OR</p> | <p>3.<br/>is at risk of <b>substantial developmental delay</b> because of <i>multiple</i> factors like homelessness, teen parent, and substance abuse.</p> |
|---|--|--|



# Pre-K

## Supporting Young Children with Disabilities Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

### Early Intervention

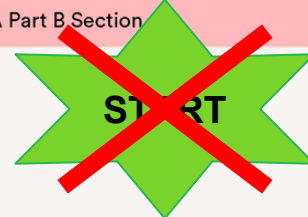
Birth through Two Years Old  
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Three through Five Years Old  
IDEA Part B Section

### Special Education

Five through 21 Years  
IDEA Part B



*This graphic shows the way in which we conceptualize IDEA for the purposes of this blog series. Age ranges and terminology may differ slightly in different states and circumstances.*

Please help us reach our potential  
and increase state funding for Early  
On Michigan by \$15M!



# Christy Callahan, M.A.

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- Director of Innovative Projects at Clinton County RESA
- Responsible for administration of training and outreach activities on behalf of *Early On*
  - 1800earlyon.org
  - *Early On* Training and Technical Assistance
  - *Early On* Center for Higher Education
- President, *Early On*® Michigan Foundation Board of Directors
- Chair, MI Division for Early Childhood Governmental Relations Committee
- Here on my own time
- Grew up in Livonia, now live in DeWitt, District 77

# *Early On*<sup>®</sup> Michigan

- **Because earlier makes the most difference, early intervention services are for the youngest years, birth to 3, and families**
- Established under Part C of IDEA
  - Every state has an early intervention system
- Eligibility
  - 20% delay in development (or 1 standard deviation below the mean) in any domain
  - Established condition likely to result in delay (medically diagnosed)
- Home-based services
- Supporting parents and families so they can support the growth/development of their babies

# Supports to Families

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- Target of intervention is the parent who will work with the baby between visits
- Strategies to use in daily routines to promote development and help with functioning and participating in family and community life

Providers include:

- Speech therapist
- Occupational therapist
- Physical therapist
- EC Sp Education teacher
- Social worker
- Psychologist

# Michigan Structure

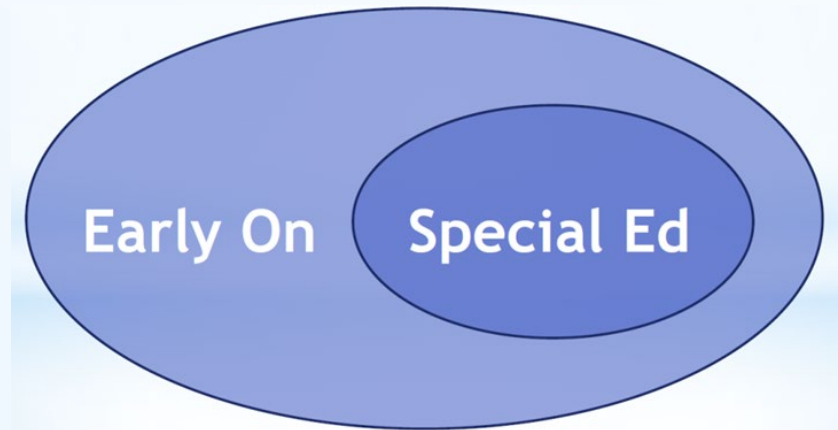
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Michigan was a Pioneer - “birth mandate state” since 1971

- Special education services to infants and toddlers prior to the federal mandate

Federal mandate in 1986 initiated Part C of IDEA

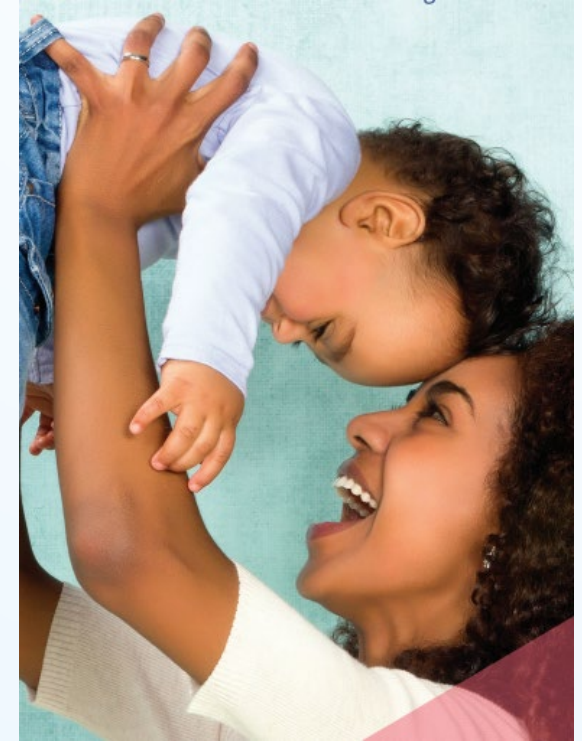
- Broader eligibility established in MI
- Within *Early On*: 2 eligible populations
  - “*Early On Only*”
  - Special Ed and *Early On*





# *Early On Michigan Numbers\**

- 12,907 infants/toddlers eligible on a given day
- 26,386 served annually
- 42% qualify for special education
  - More frequent service, highly qualified personnel
- 58% do not qualify for special education
  - Less frequent service, not adequate to meet need





# Early On Accountability: Federal Indicators

## Part C State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report

Indicator 6: **Birth - 3** identification  
rate

(percent of children with IFSPs)

Ind. 6	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
MI	3.47	2.93	3.42	3.90	4.07*
US	3.70	3.30	3.66	4.01	

# Annual Referrals\*

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Yearly Totals	17,242	13,689	17,635	19,158	21,845

**27% increase** in referrals since prior to the COVID pandemic

\*Processed via [1800earlyon.org](https://1800earlyon.org) and [mearlychildhood.org](https://mearlychildhood.org) statewide central intake

# *Early On Michigan Funding*

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- **\$14.5 M** in federal IDEA Part C
- **\$22.3 M** in state Sec. 54d
- Reimbursement for personnel costs for **special education** eligible children
- **Inequitable** millage funding throughout the state

**American Institutes for Research**  
(2024) *Early On System Costs: Understanding Early Intervention in Michigan* estimates that a high quality system in Michigan would cost approximately **\$230 M**

# Funding Makes a Difference

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A voluntary survey of Intermediate School Districts (ISDs) in October 2022 found that all 40 ISDs who responded reported that as a result of **increased funds** through Section 54d, they either **increased the frequency of *Early On* services** and/or **hired more qualified staff** to perform evaluations and provide additional services to ensure families receive the support they need.

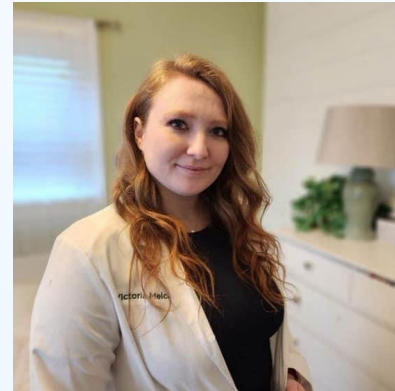
# Reasons to Increase Investment in *Early On*



1. The science of brain development tells us that **investing and intervening in the earliest years** has the potential to make the most **significant gains** for young children
2. With **PreK for All expansion**, we want our youngest learners, birth to 3, to receive the supports and services they need to position them for **success**
3. With the new requirement for **Universal Lead Screening**, more infants and toddlers will be referred to *Early On*
4. More infants and toddlers are eligible than our system can adequately serve.
5. **An increase of \$15M in Section 54d to \$37.3 M would make a difference for our Michigan families and their young children.**

# Teri Melchert, OTR/L

- *Early On* Facilitator at South Lyon Community Schools
  - Occupational Therapist
  - Early Interventionist
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- House District 50



# Michigan's *Early On*<sup>®</sup> system is divided in 2 parts

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- Infants and toddlers with a 20% delay in at least one developmental domain, or an established condition likely to lead to a delay, qualify for *Early On*<sup>®</sup>

AND

- Per School Code Section 1711(1)(f), Michigan provides special education to infants and toddlers who meet eligibility criteria under the Michigan Administrative Rules for Special Education (MARSE)

SO

- There are TWO distinct groups of children in *Early On*<sup>®</sup>. One group is eligible for *Early On*<sup>®</sup> ONLY, and the other is eligible for *Early On*<sup>®</sup> AND Special Education (or MMSE).

# Inconsistent Funding Streams Between Groups

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- Our bifurcated system has created inconsistencies and gaps in funding for infants and toddlers with disabilities
  - *Early On Only*
    - Federal IDEA Part C
    - SSA Section 54d
  - *Early On plus Special Education*
    - Federal IDEA Part C & SSA Section 54d and
      - Section 52
      - Per pupil funding
      - Section 51a cost reimbursement

One group of children has access to fewer pots of funding and less resources



# Type and Frequency of Services are Impacted by Funding Inconsistencies

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- Children who are also eligible for Special Education receive more frequent and more intense services than their *Early On Only* peers
- *Early On Only* children have limited access to the array of federally qualified service providers than their Special Education eligible peers
- Disparities in ISD 0-3 special education identification rates document many children lack access to appropriate evaluation services
- Eligibility and funding streams limit children's access to the frequency, intensity, duration and array of early intervention services they are entitled to under IDEA Part C

# Victoria Martinez

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*Early On Parent*

[mrs.victoria.martinez@gmail.com](mailto:mrs.victoria.martinez@gmail.com)

# *Early On: A Parent's Perspective*

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- More families can be served
- Less families will be turned away
- Increase child find activities and outreach
- Gives a good foundation for children going into preschool and this, in turn could save funding on the part B side
- Many not receiving the frequency or types of services they need and
- Many are not getting any support

# Kae Dubai

[kae.dubay@inghamisd.org](mailto:kae.dubay@inghamisd.org)

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*Early On Parent &*

Ingham Great Start Collaborative  
Co-Coordinator, Community  
Outreach & Literacy





# Parent Perspective of *Early On*

- Parent of a child who received *Early On* services
  - Enrolled at 18 months
  - Significant Speech Delay
    - 47% Delay
    - Non-Verbal
    - Articulation & Phonological Disorders
  - Sensory Processing Disorder
    - Regulation and Communication Struggles



# Exiting *Early On*

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- Bumpy Road
  - Unmet Needs
- Special Education Eligible
  - 20% Intelligibility
  - Received IEP for Speech
- Outside Services
  - Occupational Therapy
  - Social Worker

# Connection Point

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- *Early On* was the link to the additional services
  - Knowledge of Services Available
  - Accessing Services
  - Navigating Services

# Results

**Happy, Healthy, Socially,  
Emotionally & Academically  
Successful *Almost* 13-Year-  
Old**





# Why???

- Sibling with Mental Illness
  - Lack of Services Available
  - “Well, he’s not a cool kid”
  - Social and Academic Struggles
    - High School Dropout
    - Drug and Alcohol Abuse



# What was Different?

## Ted

- Little to no supports or services
- Social & academic struggles

- Poor coping skills
- Alcohol & drug abuse

- Joblessness & Homelessness
- Gained stability at 44 years old

## Lee

- Early On Services
- Special Education Services

- Outside OT & Social worker services
- Socially, emotionally and academically ready at the onset of school

- Social, emotional and academic success
- Future Opportunities

# Services/Supports Available

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- Michigan offers many early childhood programs and services, including home-based services
  - Prevention vs Intervention
- *Early On* is designed to target and support children with delays and disabilities
- *Early On* does not have income eligibility
  - ALICE threshold

# Increased Funding

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- Less staff = less families served
- Higher referrals
- Higher neurodivergent population
- CAPTA Referrals

# Community Outreach

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- Large majority of children are 2 years of age
- Enrolling at a younger age increases positive outcomes
- Investing Early:
  - Reduces number of children receiving special education services
  - Reduces costs in K-12 system
  - Increases positive outcomes

# Fully Funded *Early On*

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- Staff and Family Advocates in the Communities
  - Build trust and relationships with most vulnerable populations
    - Hospitals
    - Pediatrician Offices
- Shared Professional Development Opportunities
- Increase Awareness of *Early On* Services
- Build Trust in the Community and Reduce Stigmas
- Increase Positive Outcomes

Please help us reach our potential  
and increase state funding for Early  
On Michigan by \$15M!





# What a Fully Funded *Early On* System Means to Families



Healthy, Socially, Emotionally and Academically  
Successful Children & Families