

## Michigan AEYC Policy Agenda

Michigan AEYC is a resource for current research and practices related to early childhood education (ages prenatal through eight) and supports continued improvement in policy. Michigan AEYC drafts or revises an annual policy agenda. These points are intertwined, evolving, and used to guide work with members, the community, legislature and other stakeholders on a state and local level. From October 1, 2022 through September 30, 2023, Michigan AEYC has chosen to focus on the following agenda items:

### **Early Childhood Workforce**

The Early Childhood field is experiencing a workforce crisis. In a survey from 2021, 87% of child care centers indicated that they were experiencing staffing shortages. Without enough early childhood professionals-licensed home providers, child care centers, and other early childhood programs and services do not have the ability to serve their communities and families to full capacity. Professionals deserve affordable education and compensation equitable to the work to make a strong, positive impact at a critical time in a child's development. Initiatives must be prioritized to attract and retain quality early childhood professionals.

### **Affordable and Accessible High Quality Early Learning**

USDHHS recommends that a family spend no more than [7%](#) of their annual income on child care, yet most families who are able to afford care are spending significantly more. Many families cannot access quality care. Expenses are rising for providers, creating a larger divide between cost and affordability; particularly when implementing quality. More work needs to be done to improve the affordability and accessibility to high quality early learning for all young children through a variety of innovative, bipartisan funding models.

### **Early Language and Literacy Development**

Providing children with language and literacy-rich environments and interactions strengthen children's potential to become proficient readers and writers. Developmentally appropriate activities support children's literacy knowledge and skills in the early years, which predict later literacy achievement. We support the efforts in Michigan that are underway related to research-based essential literacy practices.

### **Social-Emotional Competence of Young Children and Staff**

We recognize the necessity of supporting social-emotional competence in both children and professionals working with young children as a key indicator to later school success. With the residual impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, this is a priority now more than ever. Studies on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) make evident the impact of stress and trauma on young children and the role educators can play to reduce that stress. To better support children, educators need resources to respond to the increasing need for their own mental health and well-being. Families need access to referral opportunities and information about how to support their child's social emotional development. It is essential that educators have professional learning opportunities to identify and address mental health and well-being. Future initiatives must continue to address the ecological, social-emotional needs of children, families, professionals, and community members.

### **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion for Children and Early Childhood Professionals**

Equitability ensures resources are distributed based on need so that all can participate fairly. All children have the right to equitable learning opportunities that help them achieve their full potential as engaged learners and valued members of society, which includes diverse educators. We support initiatives that embrace diversity and full inclusion as strengths, promote anti-bias education, uphold fundamental principles of fairness and justice, and work to eliminate structural inequities that limit equitable learning opportunities.