

A photograph of four young children of diverse backgrounds. In the foreground, a girl with curly hair and a pink and white striped sweater makes a peace sign. Next to her, a boy in a yellow and red jacket has his hands clasped near his mouth. Behind them, another boy in a purple sweater also makes a peace sign, and a girl in a red and white striped sweater points her index finger. The background is a soft-focus outdoor setting with greenery.

Michigan Parents' Council

2022 Report to the Governor



Executive Summary

The Michigan Parents' Council (MPC) was created by Executive Order 2022-5 to provide a formal opportunity for parents and families to engage at the state level in the education policy and budget-making process. The MPC was designed to make certain the voices and experiences of parents and families are an integral component of the 2023–2024 budget cycle and to ensure that Michigan's students receive a world-class education.

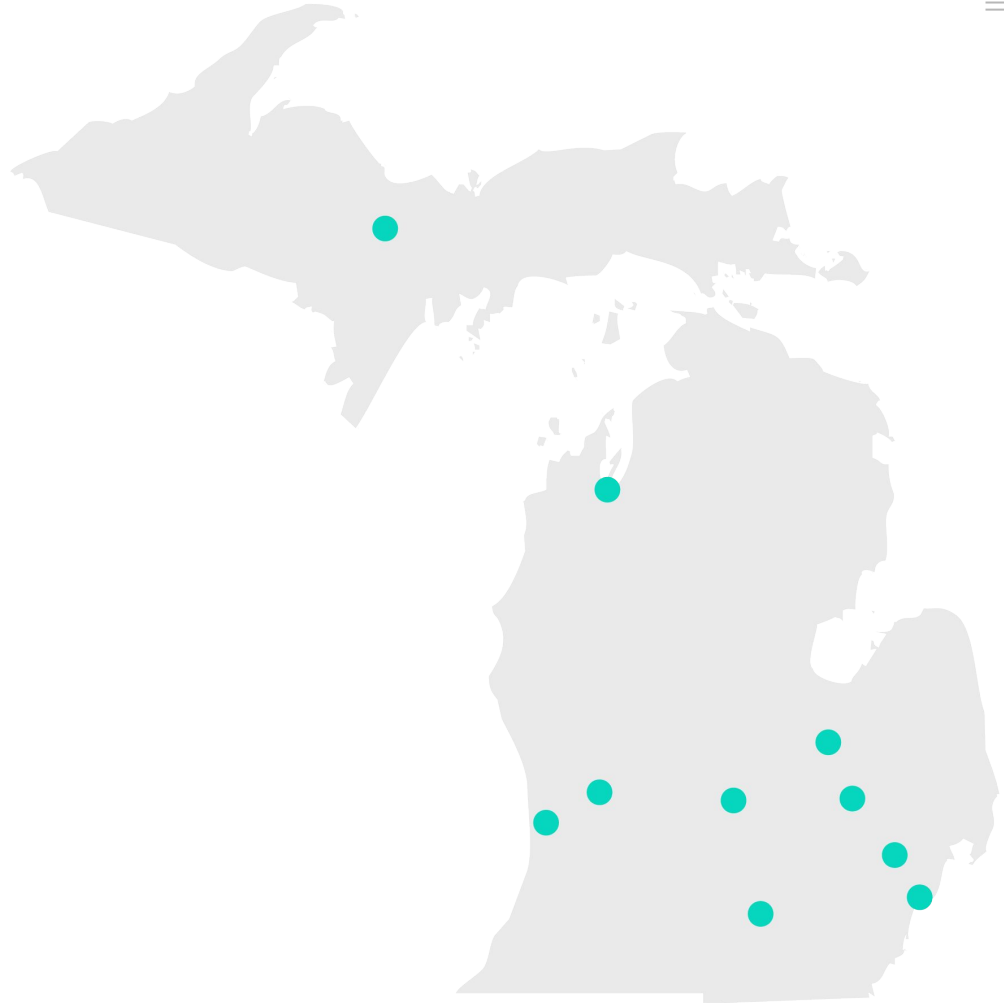
The council heard from thousands of parents across the state, who identified that focusing on student mental health, quality education experiences, school safety, and well-supported educators is vital for a strong education system in our state.





Michigan Parents' Council Members

- DeWitt
- Holland
- Detroit
- Gwinn
- Birch Run
- Grand Rapids
- Traverse City
- Bloomfield Hills
- Grand Blanc
- Jackson





Michigan Parents' Council Members

Appointees included parents from across the state with children in the pre-K–12 education system that represent diverse learning and life experiences, including special education, early childhood, English as a second language, foster care, and LGBTQ+ students.

- Tracey Troy, chair
- Blanca J. Astua
- LaQuitta Brown
- Jennifer L. Figler
- Cindy E. Gamboa
- Sarah Kucher
- Yazeed Moore
- Bailey Nuss
- Ranya Shbeib
- Rafael Turner
- Monique Zantop
- Stacy Ann Sipes
- Stephanie O'Dea

Participating in the MPC has been incredibly valuable as a parent and a leader of the state's largest volunteer child advocacy organization. As a mother of two children with different learning styles and aptitudes, sharing my voice to ensure success for both is my priority. At the same time, the conversations highlighted common themes I can use to develop goals in my volunteer role to help expand support for Michigan students and their families.

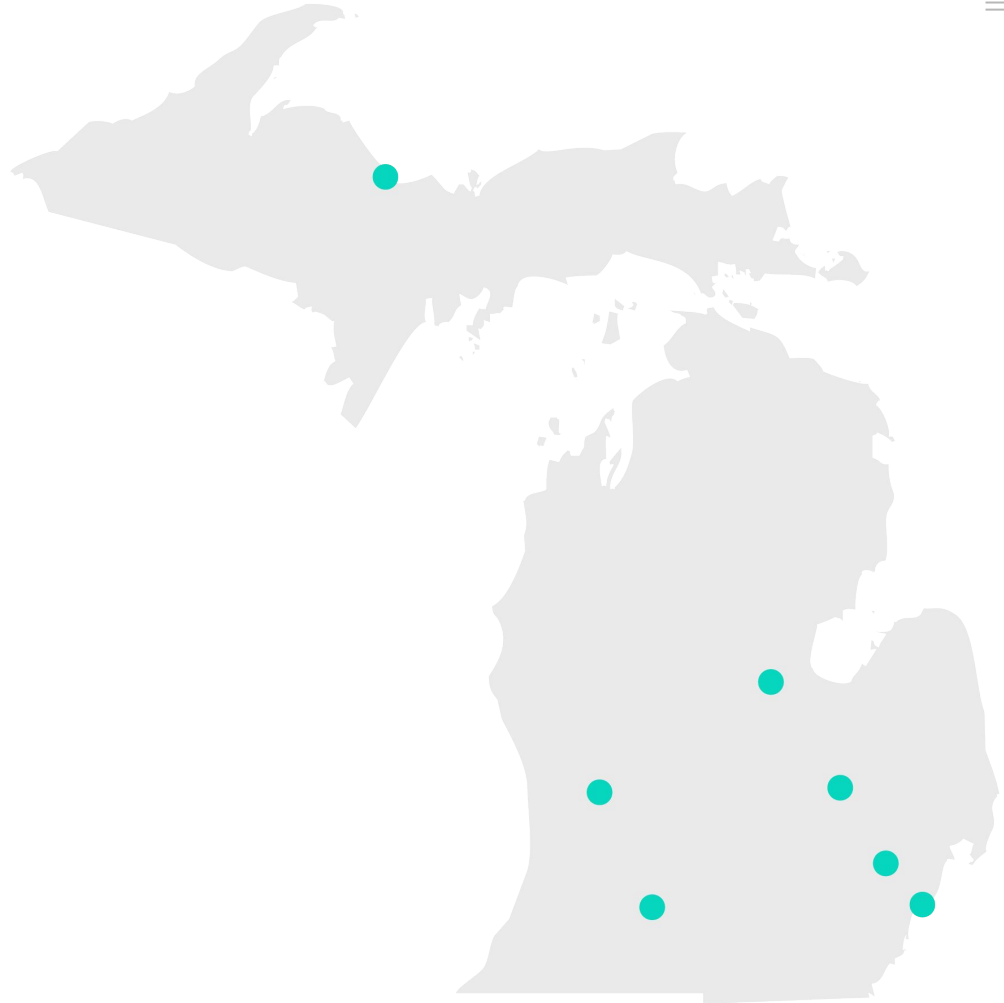
Tracey Troy, MPC Chair



Michigan Parents' Council Reach

Round table locations


- Marquette
- Detroit
- Grand Rapids
- Battle Creek
- Flint
- Midland
- Eastpointe
- Virtual





Michigan Parents' Council Reach

The MPC connected with more than 13,500 parents from every corner of the state through seven in-person community conversations, one virtual roundtable, and an online survey. Feedback was collected from parents in all 83 counties and more than 500 school districts, providing parents the opportunity to share their ideas about strengthening learning, mental health, and school safety.



Top Priorities for Parents

While each student, parent, and school is unique, there was consensus among parents that the state's education policy and budget priorities should continue to:

- Support students' growing mental health needs
- Create safe and welcoming school environments for students and families
- Address students' diverse learning needs, including learning gaps and unfinished learning
- Support school staff so they can focus on student learning



Schools Are Prioritizing Mental Health

84%

of parents reported that student
mental health is important or very
important to them.



Schools Are Prioritizing Mental Health

Parents reported an increased focus on student mental health, sharing that:

- Schools are implementing mental health curriculum
- Students have more access to supports like calming rooms, therapy animals, and increased physical activity
- Some schools have partnered with local community mental health agencies to integrate services within schools
- Schools are addressing bullying and conflict more consistently

Calming resource rooms with clothing and other basic items can help students feel supported.

Eastpointe parent

Teachers need more training on trauma, sensitivity, conflict resolution, and supporting special needs children.

Detroit parent

A photograph of a person with a vibrant rainbow-colored wig resting their head on a light-colored wooden desk in a classroom. The person is wearing a grey long-sleeved shirt and dark pants. A pair of glasses lies on the desk near their head. In the background, a whiteboard with a grid is visible, along with a colorful bulletin board on the left. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent orange filter.

There Is Still More We Can Do To Support Student Mental Health

Parents agreed that schools can do even more to support students' mental health needs, explaining that:

- There is a significant shortage of school- and community-based mental health providers
- Students' home lives significantly impact their school success—teachers are often unaware of student circumstances, making it difficult to rally resources to best support kids' needs
- Students need to have an adult in the school they can trust; while lots of students have these relationships, some still feel disconnected
- Caregivers and parents are not aware of how to access resources in their school
- Parents are unsure of how schools are using funding to support mental health
- Teacher and administrator mental health needs need more attention

Teachers are expected to manage student mental health but don't have any mental health supports for themselves.

Grand Rapids parent

You stress families out when you send them looking for services instead of helping them navigate the system. When you're supported, you feel like you can get your kid to school and know that there is help.

Eastpointe parent



School Safety Is a Top Priority

92%

of parents reported that school
safety is important or very
important to them.



School Safety Is a Top Priority

Parents shared that school safety is multifaceted and is a primary concern, noting that:

- School safety and student mental health are inextricably linked
- It is appreciated when schools have open lines of consistent, timely communication, especially when communicating about school incidences
- Parents and students should be held accountable for student behavior
- Active shooter and lockdown drills are significant stressors for students
- Every student at every school should have an adult they trust
- School resource officers should be trained appropriately and refrain from operating from a law enforcement perspective
- Aging school buildings are both unsafe and inequitable for students

Schools focus on target hardening for the building, but safety comes from within—you need to make sure students feel safe and supported around their peers.

Midland parent

Relationships are key to security. Resource officers need to have relationships with students to let kids know why they are there and that they can help de-escalate situations.

Flint parent

A woman with curly hair, wearing a dark blazer, is standing in profile and writing on a chalkboard with a piece of chalk. The background is a warm, orange-toned wall.

Quality Education Experiences and Unfinished Learning Are Important to Parents

74%

of parents reported that unfinished learning is important or very important to them.

71%

reported that after-school programs are important or very important.

72%

reported that preschool and early childhood programs are important or very important.

A woman with dark curly hair, wearing a dark blazer, is standing in profile and writing on a chalkboard with a piece of chalk. The background is a warm, orange-toned wall.

Quality Education Experiences and Unfinished Learning Are Important to Parents

Parents confirmed that students have varying learning needs and styles that require differentiated instruction, citing that:

- Social emotional learning and student mental health are bigger priorities than academics for many parents
- Getting access to appropriate and timely individualized education programs and 504 plans is difficult in some districts
- Concerns about unfinished learning were reported more frequently in urban and rural districts
- Students need access to before- and after-school programs, tutoring, and extracurricular activities
- Standardized testing takes up significant time and creates undue pressures on students and teachers
- High-school students face significant academic pressures from parents and peers

We need to listen to what the children are saying about how to help them. Don't rely on just adults and people in positions of authority.

Detroit parent

The best way to ensure a kid learns is to ensure they have a strong connection with a teacher.

Battle Creek parent

A photograph of a teacher and a young student in a classroom. The teacher, a Black woman with her hair in a bun, is wearing a colorful patterned shirt and pointing with a pen at a globe. The student, a young boy of Asian descent, is wearing a yellow shirt and looking at the globe. The globe is on a desk, and a world map is visible on the wall in the background.

Teachers Are Critical to Students' Success

85%

of parents reported that teacher retention and recruitment is important or very important to them.

A photograph of a Black female teacher and a young Asian male student in a classroom. The teacher is pointing at a globe on a desk, and the student is looking at it intently. A world map is visible on the wall behind them.

Teachers Are Critical to Students' Success

Parents expressed concern that good teachers are leaving the profession and new teacher recruitment is down, noting that:

- Educators are being asked to do a lot to support students' academic, social-emotional, and mental health needs
- Public opinion of educators is having a negative impact on teacher retention
- There aren't always enough staff to support students' needs—social workers, paraprofessionals, counselors, nurses, etc.
- School staff deserve to be paid more
- Educators need meaningful professional development opportunities
- School staff and future teachers need more pathways to certification

The quality of teachers is top notch, but we worry about being able to attract and retain teachers long term.

Marquette parent

We need to have the funding to pay people what they are worth to do this job, making sure there are proper funding, roles, and opportunities to help students holistically.

Flint parent

A woman with brown hair in a ponytail, wearing glasses and a white button-down shirt, is pointing her right hand towards a wall. She is holding a small orange object in her left hand. In the background, two men are visible: one in a yellow jacket and another in a blue shirt. The scene is indoors with warm lighting and a modern aesthetic.

Michigan Parents' Council Recommendations

Based on the voices of thousands of Michigan parents, the council recommends that 2023–2024 education policy and budget initiatives:

- Continue to prioritize and support access to **student mental health and school safety funding** for schools in the state budget, including funds for counselors and social workers, school programming, and curriculum
- Provide schools with the resources and flexibility to meet the **unique learning needs of every student**
- Continue supporting creative **teacher recruitment and certification funding strategies**
- Expand **opportunities for parents and students to give feedback** on state and local education policy and budget initiatives