

**Reinvigorating Michigan's Early Childhood Infrastructure:
Help Me Grow Collaboratives
FY27 Budget Proposal - Section 32P**



The Case for Early Childhood System Building

Ninety percent of brain development happens before kindergarten, with more than one million new neural connections forming every second in the earliest years. During this critical window, everyday experiences—loving relationships, play, routines, and responsive care—build the foundation for lifelong learning and well-being.

Parents and families are children's first and most important teachers. When communities are organized to support them, children thrive. Early childhood systems building aligns programs, services, and partners so families can easily access what they need, while communities use data to continuously improve outcomes.

Without coordinated systems, families must navigate complex services on their own—often missing critical supports during the most important developmental years. **Michigan has the opportunity to rebuild this infrastructure and ensure every child has the opportunity to thrive.**

The Current Challenge

Budget cuts to Section 32p have dismantled the local infrastructure of Great Start Collaboratives that once connected families, providers, and communities. As a result, communities have lost:

- **Trusted Connections to Families:** Without coordinated outreach, families lose access to navigation, parenting resources, literacy supports, and community programs.
- **Universal Prevention & Early Identification:** Reduced developmental screening, home visiting, and follow-up delays identification of developmental or family needs.
- **Medical & Provider Outreach:** Less engagement with pediatricians, OB-GYNs, and community partners weakens referral pathways for families.
- **Local System Leadership & Coordination:** Without a neutral convener, services operate in silos, gaps go unaddressed, and system-wide accountability is lost.

The Solution: Help Me Grow Collaboratives

With input from the early childhood field and support from MAISA, Michigan can reinvigorate local early childhood systems by aligning efforts with the national Help Me Grow model and building on the success of Great Start Collaboratives. This Help Me Grow model will identify the challenges and barriers within the early childhood system and work to coordinate efforts, reduce duplication, and enhance the system to be more effective for children and families.

Why this Model Works for Michigan

- **Strong Local Commitment:** 44 out of 56 ISDs had already committed to Help Me Grow by choice.
- **Accountability:** Data collection and annual fidelity assessments ensure quality implementation.
- **Local Control, State Vision:** Leverage existing ISD infrastructure to ensure local flexibility within a cohesive statewide structure, allowing meaningful inclusion of family leadership and voice.
- **Proven ROI:** Uses a Help Me Grow-specific Return on Investment calculator to demonstrate clear cost savings to the state.
- **Evidence-Based Investments:** Deep investment in evidence-based family support services, especially birth through five literacy.

Adopt **Help Me Grow Collaboratives** as the early childhood systems building initiative for prenatal through age 5 with the following outcomes:

1. Improve family access, leadership, and engagement
2. Enhance child development, learning, and well-being
3. Create strong, efficient community systems

<p>Help Me Grow Collaborative Implementation (\$15.9M)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Convene an ISD based HMG Collaborative on a regular basis to ensure early childhood systems building through the lens of the outcomes with active partnership with families and multiple community organizations and to develop strategies aligned with the Help Me Grow model. ● Staffing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ At least 0.8 FTE Help Me Grow Lead (system-building) ○ At least 0.5 FTE Care Coordinator, with opportunities for ISD partnerships as needed ● Ensure implementation of and show growth towards the HMG National Fidelity Assessment, including the following components: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Centralized Access Point ○ Family and Community Outreach ○ Child Health Provider Outreach ○ Data Collection and Analysis ● Connect families to needed services through universal developmental screening and referrals with follow up support through the Care Coordinator ● Complete annual Help Me Grow National Fidelity Assessment and track key data
<p>Family Support Services (\$7.19M)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Proposal includes funding for each ISD to implement evidence-based, family-centered, data-driven family support services, including, but not limited to, home visiting ● \$3.5 million to hold harmless those that had home visiting and \$90,000 per ISD to add family support services to the rest ● Initiatives must be aligned with Help Me Grow National Fidelity Assessment and MiLEAP's strategic vision
<p>Family Engagement and Early Literacy (\$4M)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Funds to advance evidence-based literacy practices that engage families using trained home visitors, early childhood professionals, and medical providers through recurring visits ● Strategies must educate families on the importance of reading aloud with their children, reading frequency, and other developmentally appropriate, evidence-based strategies to support early literacy ● Strategies must also include improving family access to developmentally appropriate children's books, and require the HMG collaborative to collect data in support of improving early literacy among children ages 0-5 years ● Funds distributed according to last year's allocation formula
<p>State Leadership and Support (\$1.4M)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Help Me Grow Strategic Leadership, Technical Assistance, and Central Access

One easy door for families.
One coordinated system before school entry.
One shared vision for measurable results.