



THE EARLY CHILDHOOD INVESTMENT CORPORATION

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## STATE UPDATE

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The Legislature returned to Lansing this week with the Senate in session for two days and the House one. While formal legislative activity was virtually non-existent this week, the return to Lansing did give the caucuses an opportunity to meet and discuss the looming budget crisis. Closed-door negotiations continue between legislative leaders from both the House and the Senate and the Governor's office, but little progress is being made. Senate Majority Leader Mike Bishop reported this week that he expects the Governor to push the talks to the deadline in hopes of forcing the Legislature into a tax increase. State revenue collections continue to come in below projected numbers, so the deficit continues to grow and is now estimated at \$2.8 billion for the next fiscal year. Negotiations on individual department budgets will not begin in earnest until the Speaker of the House, Senate Majority Leader and Governor agree in broad terms to the level of cuts, amount of stimulus money to be used, and the amount of new revenue to be used in balancing the budget deficit.

The advocacy and out-reach efforts of early childhood supporters continue to be heard and felt statewide. This week, the Kalamazoo Great Start Collaborative and ISAAC (the Interfaith Strategy for Advocacy and Action in the Community) organized a group of advocates to visit the Capitol. The visit went extremely well, as the group was able to facilitate engaging conversations with their local legislators and their staff. This type of hands-on advocacy can be particularly effective as we reach the final stages of the budget debate and ultimate decisions will have to be made by the legislators. Hearing first-hand from constituents who value investment in early childhood programs should encourage legislators to support early childhood programs as well. It is more imperative than ever for us to continue our advocacy efforts and let our elected officials know that we will not tolerate this budget being balanced on the backs of young children and their families.

Our advocacy efforts, although often tiresome and repetitive, have been working. Legislators are hearing loud and clear that funding for early childhood activities is important to their constituents. Our efforts need to continue and



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escalate. Every single legislator needs to be bombarded with contacts from constituents urging their support of early childhood funding. The committee chairs and others who are negotiating these budgets will be primarily influenced by their colleagues as far as establishing priorities to preserve funding for.

In addition, we are encouraging groups to visit Lansing on session days between now and Oct.1<sup>st</sup>. If you are able and willing to organize a group of advocates, regardless of size, from your local community to visit Lansing on a Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday between now and the end of September please contact your Great Start Collaborative to arrange details through the ECIC.



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