

OASIS · AT A GLANCE

Special education funding reform and the MI Blueprint

School funding sounds like someone else's fight once your child ages out. It isn't. Every dollar Michigan fails to invest in special education early becomes a bigger crisis in the adult service system later, and caregivers who've already lived that crisis have standing to say so.

BY JIM PALASTY · 10 MIN READ · WHY AN AGED-OUT FAMILY SHOULD STILL SHOW UP IN LANSING

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ROUGHLY THE YEARS SINCE MICHIGAN'S SPECIAL ED FUNDING FORMULA WAS LAST OVERHAULED

Michigan's special education funding structure has gone largely unchanged for decades while costs and needs have grown. The Michigan Special Education Blueprint for Student Success is the most serious reform proposal in that entire span.

How it works

THREE STEPS

STEP 1

An outdated formula

Michigan's special education funding structure has remained largely unchanged for roughly four decades, even as costs and needs grew.



STEP 2

The MI Blueprint proposes reform

A comprehensive set of recommendations aims to modernize funding, staffing, and support structures statewide.



STEP 3

Adult-service families still have standing

The upstream failure in school funding is directly connected to the downstream crisis families face after their child ages out.

How to engage with MI Blueprint advocacy

Learn the proposal	Review what the MI Blueprint for Student Success actually recommends
Connect the dots	Draft your family's story linking school underfunding to adult-service gaps
Watch the calendar	Track School Aid budget subcommittee hearing and comment windows
Submit testimony	Written or in-person testimony to the relevant legislative subcommittee
Coordinate with allies	Michigan Alliance for Families and MI DD Council both track this issue

THE TESTIMONY WRITTEN EIGHT YEARS AFTER AGING OUT

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Renee's son aged out of special education eight years before she ever testified in Lansing, and she almost didn't submit anything, assuming her family's story was too far removed to matter anymore. She wrote three paragraphs connecting his underfunded school years directly to the adult service gaps he still lives with today. A legislative aide told her afterward it was the only testimony in that hearing that traced the line all the way from kindergarten funding to a 30-year-old man's current waiver waitlist.

NOBODY ELSE IN THAT ROOM TOLD THE WHOLE STORY END TO END. SHE WAS THE ONLY ONE WHO'D LIVED BOTH HALVES OF IT.

What matters, at a glance

MICHIGAN SPECIFIC

A four-decade-old formula

Michigan's special education funding structure has not been substantially rewritten in roughly forty years, despite dramatically changed needs.

What the MI Blueprint proposes

A comprehensive reform package addressing funding adequacy, staffing shortages, and support structures across the state's special education system.

Underfunding compounds downstream

Inadequate school-based investment produces students who reach adulthood with fewer skills and weaker service connections, feeding directly into the adult crisis.

Your family still has standing

Aged-out families understand the downstream cost of underfunded special education better than almost anyone testifying in Lansing.

Committee testimony windows are narrow

Budget subcommittee hearings happen on a legislative calendar. Watch for public comment windows and submit before they close.

Written testimony counts

You don't have to travel to Lansing. Written testimony submitted to the School Aid subcommittee carries real weight in the record.

BRING THESE · CHECK AS YOU GO

☐ A summary of the MI Blueprint's key recommendations

☐ A drafted version of your family's school-to-adulthood story

☐ The current School Aid budget subcommittee hearing schedule

☐ Contact information for Michigan Alliance for Families

☐ Contact information for the Michigan Developmental Disabilities Council

YOUR MOVE

When you want to engage with special education funding advocacy, here is how

1

Review what the MI Blueprint for Student Success actually proposes.

2

Draft your family's story connecting school funding to adult outcomes.

3

Track School Aid budget subcommittee hearing dates.

4

Submit written testimony before the comment window closes.

5

Coordinate with Michigan Alliance for Families or the MI DD Council.

6

Share your testimony publicly to amplify the record.

An aged-out family isn't a bystander in this fight. You're the evidence of what happens when the funding formula stays broken.

RESOURCES NAMED IN THIS POST

michiganallianceforfamilies.org · <https://www.michiganallianceforfamilies.org>

mimddc.org · <https://www.mimddc.org>

Informational only. Not legal or medical advice. Verify current program rules before acting.

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