We, the undersigned, are Michigan business leaders who firmly believe that our state must act with new commitment and urgency to ensure that all Michigan children arrive at school ready to succeed.

We believe that early childhood initaitives are among the most responsible, high-return strategies our state can pursue toward a talented, globally competitive future workforce.

A high-quality, globally competitive workforce depends on talented learners. The first key marker of student success is grade-school reading proficiency. And grade schoolers become proficient readers if they enter kindergarten healthy and ready to learn.

Many Michigan children are not on this clear path to prosperity. Seven out of 10 fourth graders are not proficient readers. One out of three kindergarteners is not fully prepared to learn when entering school.

Michigan can and must clear these roadblocks to prosperity. To this end, we call on state policymakers and local school officials to:

**1. Offer publicly funded preschool to all 4-year-olds who are eligible.** Currently, Michigan has slots for only about half of the eligible four-year olds. Approximately 38,000 four-year-olds are shut out of preschool every year.

**2. Strengthen efforts to assure the healthy growth of 0-3-year-olds.** The first 1,000 days are critical to a child’s brain development. Right from birth, children must be raised by parents and other caregivers who have the supports they need to be their children’s first and best teachers. To this end, we support expansion of evidence-based programs for 0-3-year-olds and their families, particularly home visiting for at-risk infants and toddlers.

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**Duane L. Tarnacki**

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