

RESOLUTION #3

**AFT MICHIGAN
70TH CONVENTION
MAY 2-3, 2008**

ORGANIZING TO PROMOTE QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

- Whereas, There are 638,195 children ages 0 through 4 in the state of Michigan;
- Whereas, Of the 2,579,201 families in the state of Michigan, 668,000 (or close to 26%) fall below 200% of poverty level;
- Whereas, Our state's children must have access to high quality early learning opportunities as numerous well-regarded studies have shown that high quality early childhood education increases the likelihood that children will gain higher levels of cognitive and social skills and become successful students and productive citizens and reduces the chances that they will drop out of high school, become dependent on welfare, or be incarcerated;
- Whereas, If we are to address the needs of all children to meet high standards and to close the objectionably large achievement gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students, we must turn our attention to issues related to early childhood education and school readiness; and
- Whereas, In Michigan of families with children under six there are 291,334 two-parent families with two parents in the workforce and 179,664 one-parent families with the sole parent in the workforce and;
- Whereas, The lack of access to high quality early childhood programs is a major problem that affects nearly every working family in Michigan, whether poor or middle class; and
- Whereas, Most early childhood education programs are financed largely by fees from families who can little afford the high costs which in Michigan are \$9,294 average annual fee for an infant in a full-time child care center and \$7,025 average annual fee for a four-year-old enrolled in a full-time child care center; and
- Whereas, Public funding is inadequate and our state is confronted with the unacceptable choice of increasing quality and reducing the number of children served; and
- Whereas, Although many aspects of quality in early childhood education programs, like the use of research-based practices, are linked to having adequate numbers of well-qualified adults who get decent salaries, early childhood educators rank among the lowest in pay and in training and highest in turnover rates of any occupation; and

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Whereas, In Michigan, the average income of a full-time year-round child care provider is \$19,920 a year; and

Whereas, We can learn from and build upon successful, high quality early learning programs such as Head Start, the federal early childhood program for disadvantaged children; NOW THEREFORE BE IT

RESOLVED: That AFT Michigan and its affiliates: Will work with all stakeholders in the state of Michigan to ensure high quality early childhood education programs are available to all children but especially those children who live in conditions which put them most at risk of not achieving at the level of their peers. AND BE IT FURTHER

RESOLVED: Will reach out to early childhood educators to assist them in building an organization with our union and a professional voice to improve working conditions, pay and benefits and opportunities for professional development.; AND BE IT FURTHER

RESOLVED: Will continue our strong support for Head Start including adequate funding to ensure children and their families are well-served and staff is well-compensated. AND BE IT FURTHER

RESOLVED: Will bring together for purposes of ongoing advice and counsel our members in higher education who train and educate early childhood teachers and staff, our members working in early education programs and classroom and early educators who want to join with us in building an organization for the workforce; and BE IT FINALLY

RESOLVED: With a high-skilled workforce of the future in mind, with a commitment to eliminating the achievement gap and promoting life-long learning for all Michigan's citizens, AFT Michigan will advocate with the state's elected officials for a system of universal and voluntary early childhood education that provides every Michigan family with high quality preschool and early childhood education options while ensuring that those who work in the field are well compensated and recognized as professionals.

Submitted by:
Resolution Committee