



Building Pathways in Michigan: Advancing Student Success and Strengthening the Workforce

Supporting Student Parents Benefits Michigan

April 2, 2026



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www.urban.org

Show of hands

Who has been in school while parenting?

Who has known someone in school while parenting?

Supporting student parents can be a win all around

Good for students

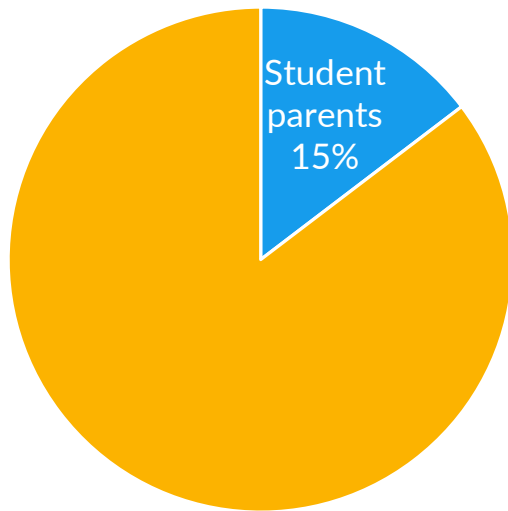
Good for children and families

Good for colleges

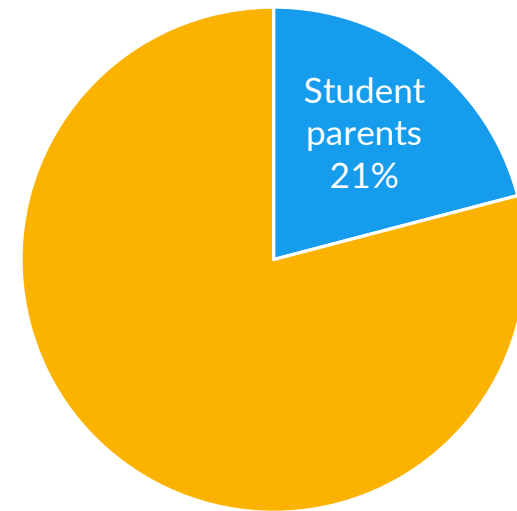
Good for Michigan!

Who are student parents?

Undergrads at all public Michigan colleges, 2020



Undergrads at Michigan community colleges, 2020



56,000 public undergrads
+18,000 private undergrads
+19,000 graduate students

Michigan's parenting students are diligent – and busy

- Have 2 children on average, and just over half have a child under age 6
- 79% have a job, working an average of 34 hours per week
- Often enrolled part-time, more often online
- Have the same GPAs as nonparenting students

Juggling three heavy balls!

There is a large overlap with other priority groups



18%
of undergraduate
students are
parents
3.14 million



22%
of undergraduates
at community and
technical colleges
are parents
1.57 million



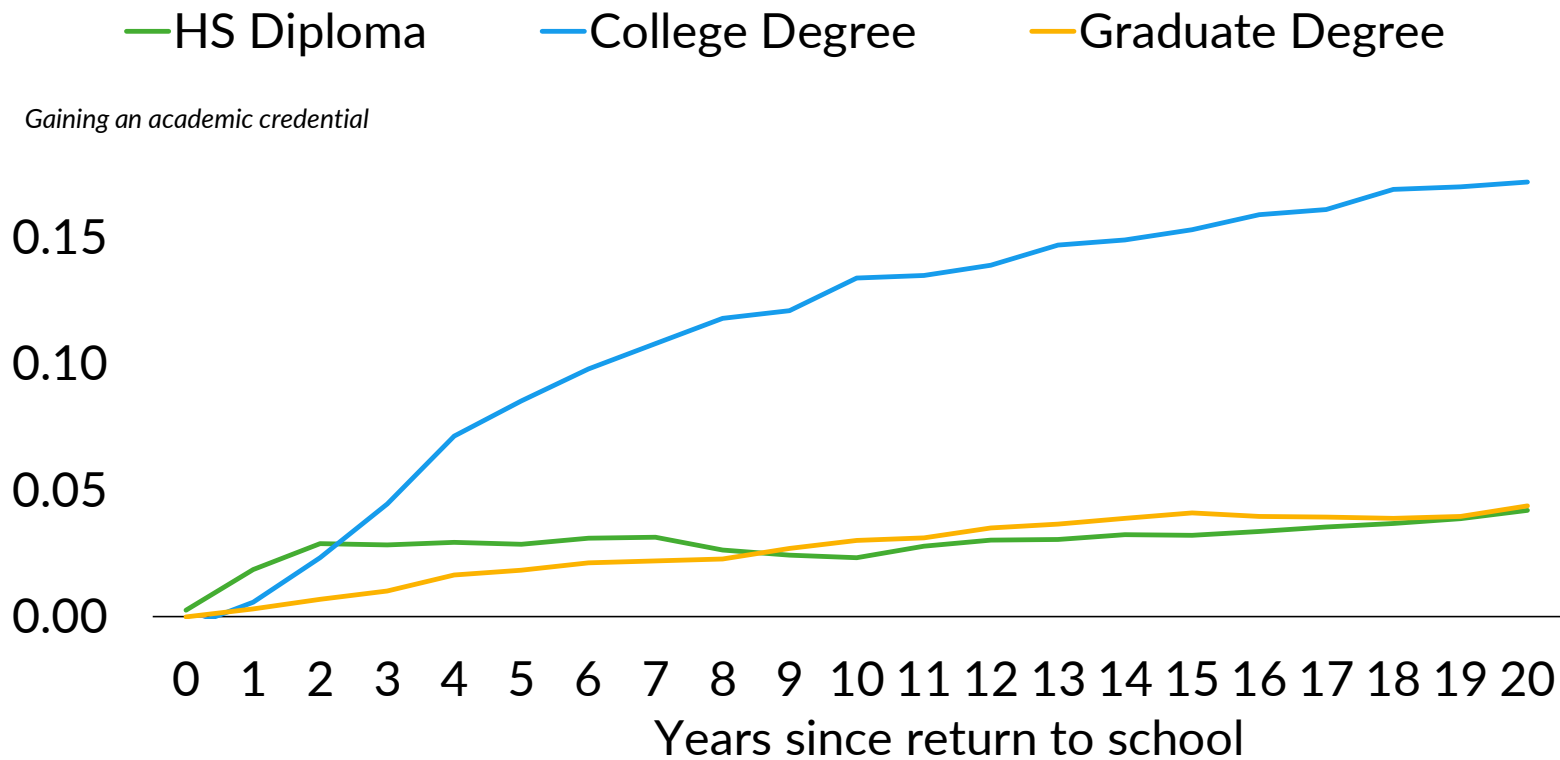
28%
of first-gen
undergraduates
are parents
1.51 million



45%
of veteran
undergraduates
are parents
286,000

Also more likely to be adult learners

Student parents (mothers in this chart) can take many years to complete a degree



1/3 of student mothers complete a higher credential eventually

Less than 1/4 of mothers who did not have a college degree completed one

Student parents are 55% less likely to complete a degree or credential in 6 years, even after controlling for demographics

Supporting Student Parents Pays off

Payoffs for mothers



Mothers who reenroll in school

+ \$2,900/year earnings gain



Mothers who reenroll and complete a degree

+ \$9,500/year earnings gain

Payoffs for children



Children of mothers who reenroll and complete a degree

- +** Gains in reading and verbal scores
- +** 9% more likely to complete high school
- +** 21% more likely to enroll in college
- +** 38% more likely to get a college degree
- +** \$5,700 average earnings gain per year in early adulthood

Payoffs for colleges

In Michigan, there are over **900,000** parents of minor children without a college degree who are not currently enrolled in school

- More than **1 in 3** have some college experience

This is an important recruitment population!

Payoffs for Michigan



Investing in student parents pays off for taxpayers through higher taxes and lower benefit receipt

Specifically:

- **targeted supportive programming at public colleges** pays for itself **\$5.36 per \$1.00 spent**
- **a \$3000 annual scholarship for low-income parents** pays for itself **\$1.73 per \$1.00 spent**
- **affordable on-campus child care** pays for itself **\$1.24 per \$1.00 spent** (and yields the largest increase in graduates)

That doesn't even count all the personal benefits to students and families – or broader benefits to communities!

What else can we do?

Collect data!

“When you are invisible, so are your problems.”

Knowing averages on the national, regional, or even state level is not enough.

- Colleges and college systems needs to be able to identify:
 - How many parenting students they are serving, and how many could they be serving
 - What their parenting students look like
 - What the trajectories are for their students

Michigan tried this once!

Sec. 275i. Students with Dependent Children Data Reporting Requirement

Requires public universities to collect data on students with dependent children, such as the number of enrolled students with dependents, programs and resources available, and the barriers preventing students from completing a degree. The collection of the data must protect student privacy and would be used in future appropriations decisions.

*Higher Education Budget, 2020—**repealed 2021***



Dr. Caroline Sanders
District 4 Commissioner
Eastern Michigan
University

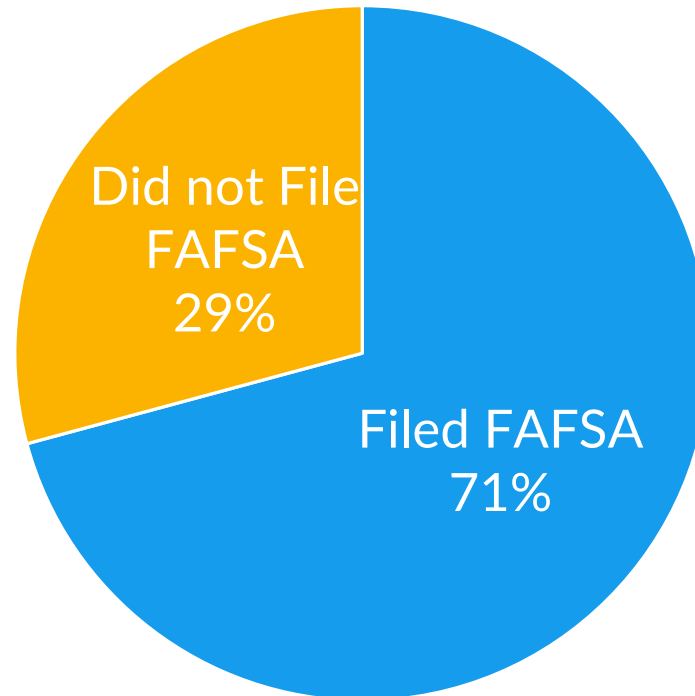
Michigan tried this once!

- Mostly relied on FAFSA
- Very uneven reporting
- Rolled back quickly
- Not clear it informed **action**

- Mostly relied on FAFSA

FAFSA is not enough

Undergrads at Michigan public colleges, 2020



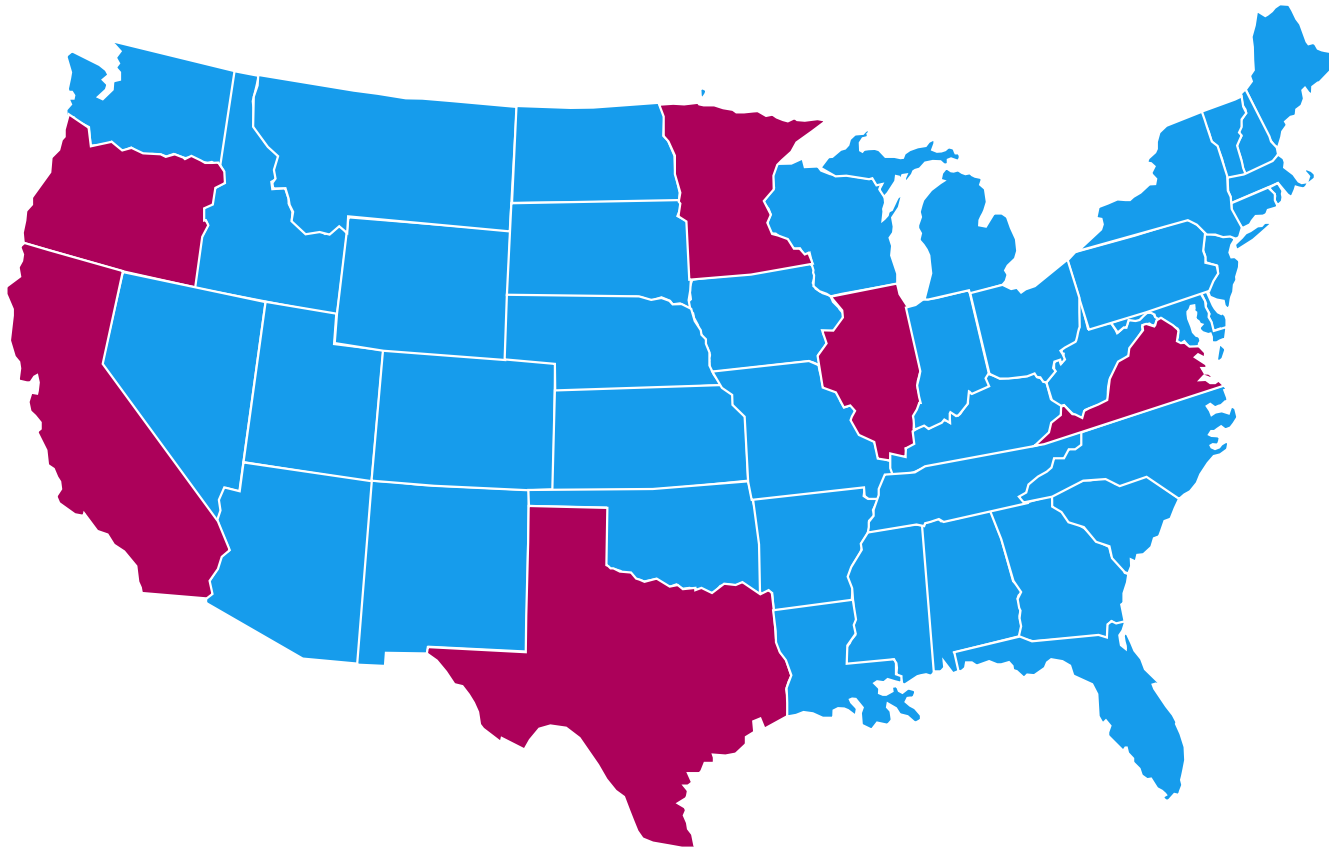
Colleges Will Need New Data Collection Efforts to Identify Parenting Students after Changes to Financial Aid Forms

Theresa Anderson

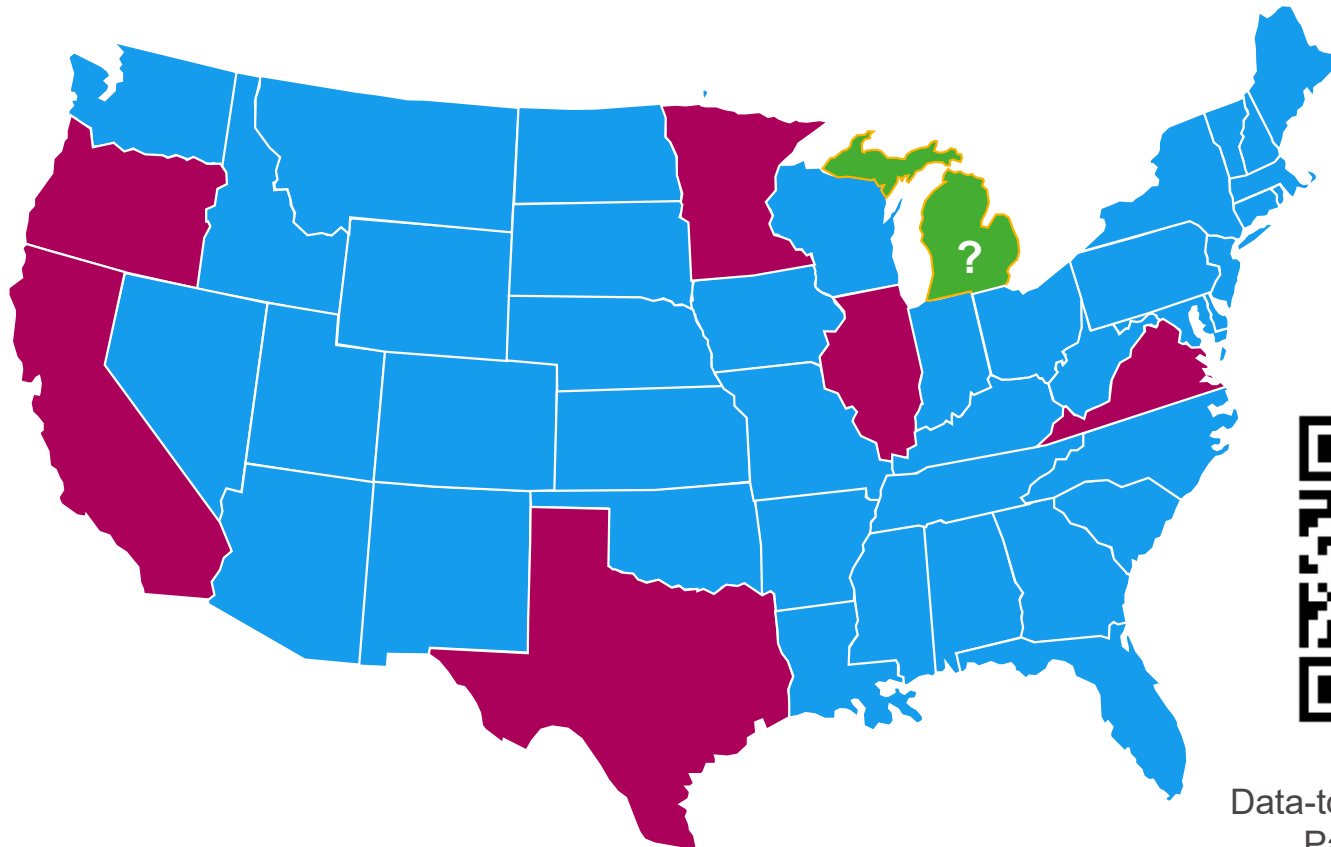
August 12, 2024



A growing number of states have student-parent data collection legislation



A growing number of states have student-parent data collection legislation



Learn more:
Data-to-Action Campaign for
Parenting Students

Thank you!

Questions?

Stay in touch!
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