



**LEADING THE ADVANCEMENT OF ALL  
MICHIGAN LIBRARIES THROUGH ADVOCACY,  
EDUCATION AND ENGAGEMENT**

February 8, 2023

Dear Senator,

When was the last time you listened to someone read aloud? Do you remember reading with your family before bed as a child? What about participating in storytime at your local library? What about your favorite elementary school memory – does it involve your teacher reading aloud? Chances are that if you are an adult who considers yourself a reader, you listened to someone read aloud frequently growing up.

Libraries all across Michigan step up every year in March to celebrate National Reading Month and the National Education Association's "Read Across America" initiative. There are so many fun ways to celebrate but what can you do as a local legislator?

Today, I want to encourage you to step up and pick a favorite book to read aloud at the public or school library in your district!

Our school and public libraries are places where childhood literacy is introduced. Reading books aloud to children ignites creativity, sparks curiosity, and stimulates the imaginations of young children as they expand their understanding of the world. Often, this leads to role-play as children grow which helps to develop other skills such as empathy, problem-solving, and morality.

Reading is a critical and essential tool for a well-rounded and educated population. But there is enormous room for growth. Michigan continues to rank in the bottom 10 states for 4th grade reading – falling from 32nd in 2019 to 43rd in 2022. Education Trust-Midwest stated in a current report, "Unless dramatic changes are made, 4th grade reading is unlikely to improve to address the state's growing education crisis and worsening opportunity gaps for underserved students." We must do more.

And this is where our school and public libraries can help make our state's national standing stronger. Schools cannot do this alone...more investment and more resources for libraries will help achieve the results that we are all striving toward.

So how do you get involved in reading aloud? Call one of the schools or libraries in your district and ask them how you might schedule a time to read to their students. I can guarantee that they will welcome you with open arms.

Participating in a read-aloud or storytime is a great way for you to engage with the community. It is also a wonderful way for your library to build a relationship with you and strengthen our collective efforts to build a well-rounded literary agenda.

Happy Reading,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Deborah E. Mikula". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Deborah E. Mikula  
Executive Director, Michigan Library Association