



MICHIGAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

February 21, 2022

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

Representative Abraham Aiyach
P.O. Box 30036, S0588 HOB
Lansing, MI MI

Dear Representative Aiyach,

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 (virtually or in-person) 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 imagination in 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 a lot of room for growth. In 2019, Michigan rose to 32nd in the nation in fourth grade reading – up from 35th in 2017 and 41st in 2015. Dr. Rice, the Superintendent for the Michigan Department of Education has said much more work needs to be done, and we couldn't agree more. After-school literacy, summer literacy, parent education and family literacy, and diversity in literacy are all areas in which the state has room to improve.

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 striving toward.

So how do you get involved in reading aloud? The Michigan Library Association would be happy to connect you with your local school or public library so you can participate in March is Reading Month. Feel free to contact me at dmikula@milibraries.org and I will connect the dots.

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 flourish extending to the right.

Deborah E. Mikula
Executive Director, Michigan Library Association