

October 10, 2025

Ms. Jennifer S. Bentley, Executive Director  
Michigan State Bar Foundation  
306 Townsend Street  
Lansing, MI 48933

Dear Ms. Bentley:

I am writing to express my strong support for the Autism Alliance of Michigan's (AAoM) application for the Michigan State Bar Foundation's Administration of Justice grant initiative.

I've been actively involved with the work of the Autism Alliance and their efforts on behalf of special education students and families since joining the board in 2022. At the beginning of last year, I stepped into the role of Chair of the Education Committee.

As a parent, a former educator, and an attorney, I have witnessed the significant barriers Michigan students with autism and other disabilities encounter in the education system. At the intersection of race and disability, we know the compounding effects of marginalization that deny access to opportunities and result in diminished outcomes. As education is a core social determinant of health and well-being across the lifespan, it is imperative that we address these challenges head-on to advocate for children and youth who experience the deepest inequities.

***The "Know Your Rights" workshops outlined in this proposal provide families with practical and accessible tools to overcome these barriers. By delivering ten workshops across Michigan, AAoM will ensure that parents and caregivers understand their rights under IDEA, including how to use the state complaint process effectively when a child's IEP is not being followed.***

***This proactive, in-person education model will not only increase awareness of the state complaint option, but will also build family confidence in advocating for their children's rights, creating long-term improvements in equity and accountability across school districts.***

I look forward to continuing my support of the Autism Alliance in this important work on behalf of marginalized students in Michigan, including this important initiative. Thank you for your consideration, and please feel free to reach out with questions.

Sincerely,



Michael Griffie  
Associate Vice President, Detroit Metro Leader, AECOMM  
Board Member, Autism Alliance of Michigan  
Chair, AAoM Education Committee

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***The "Know Your Rights" workshops proposed in this application represent a critical and practical step forward for families across Michigan. These workshops will provide parents, caregivers, and community partners with accessible, hands-on guidance about their rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Topics such as child find, eligibility, least restrictive environment, procedural safeguards, and the state complaint process will be covered in a clear, family-friendly way. Importantly, participants will leave with the tools and confidence to file written state complaints, an accessible, low-cost mechanism for addressing violations of students' rights.***

In my work representing students and families, I have seen firsthand how the lack of awareness and understanding of the state complaint process creates another barrier to justice. AAoM's approach, offering ten statewide workshops designed to empower families, will fill a critical knowledge gap while also promoting consistency, transparency, and equity in special education advocacy. We will also plan to focus at least one session in Wayne County Juvenile Court.

I strongly urge the Michigan State Bar Foundation to fund this initiative. By equipping families with the skills and knowledge to navigate the system effectively, this project advances both access to justice and systemic accountability in education.

I look forward to continuing my support of the Autism Alliance in this important work on behalf of marginalized students in Michigan, including this important initiative. Thank you for your consideration, and please feel free to reach out with questions.

Sincerely,



Judith T. New  
Lead Attorney  
Education Advocacy Unit  
Michigan Children's Law Center

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As a parent and disability advocate dedicated to advancing access and transparency for students with disabilities in Michigan, I can attest that this project represents a much-needed step toward improving access to information, strengthening parent advocacy, and addressing systemic issues in special education.

As someone who works closely with families navigating the special education system, I am witness to the fact that the state complaint process is often opaque and intimidating, particularly for those who lack legal representation or deep familiarity with educational law. ***AAoM's "Know Your Rights" workshops will directly address this gap by equipping families with the knowledge and skills to understand their legal rights and file state complaints when necessary. These ten workshops, offered statewide, will provide accessible, step-by-step guidance that empowers parents and caregivers to advocate effectively for their children.***

***By focusing on interactive, practical education, AAoM ensures that families leave not only with information but also with confidence to act. This direct outreach and education model will increase transparency, expand access to justice, and help create a more equitable and accountable special education system across Michigan.***

I wholeheartedly endorse AAoM's proposal and urge you to fund this groundbreaking and transformative project. Thank you for considering this vital investment in transparency, education, and equity for Michigan's children with disabilities.

Thank you for your consideration, and please feel free to reach out with questions.

Sincerely,

***Kelly Linton***

Kelly Linton, MA, ADAC  
ADA Specialist & Systems Advocate  
Disability Network Southwest Michigan