

# Balancing THE Scales



## A Proposal for a Systemwide Wage Scale to Address Michigan's Early Childhood Education Crisis | 2023

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# Balancing THE Scales

A Proposal for a Systemwide Wage Scale to Address  
Michigan's Early Childhood Education Crisis

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In response to Michigan's need for new, equitable business and financing models for early childhood providers, the Early Childhood Investment Corporation in 2021 established the Child Care Innovation Fund. One of the important initiatives of the ECIC's Child Care Innovation Fund was to convene a *Task Force for Equitable Educator Compensation*, which has guided and informed the development of this study and proposed wage scale, as well as the selection and implementation of two wage scale pilot sites.

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## SPECIAL THANKS TO:

### The Core Project Team

Joan Blough | Child Care Innovation Fund

Chioke Mose-Telesford | Corporation  
for a Skilled Workforce

Harriet Dichter | Consultant

Susan Hibbard | the BUILD Initiative

And to the Corporation for a Skilled Workforce, which laid the groundwork for this project through its previous work on a Detroit wage scale. CSW's research provided the foundation for this project's proposed wage scales.

# Addressing Inadequate Early Childhood Educator Pay in Region 5



Despite their importance to children, families and the economy, most early child care and education (ECE) workers in Region 5 are not paid enough to meet their basic needs. These low wages fail to reflect the skills, complexity and credentials required to teach young children.

Nor do they reflect the vital role of early childhood educators. The day-to-day services they provide for infants and toddlers (ages 0-5) support the development of healthy brain architecture, the foundation upon which all future learning and development are built.

What's more, child care is an important driver of economic success. The availability of high-quality, affordable child care allows workers with caregiving responsibilities to participate more fully in the workforce. In turn, families earn more income, and the state budget becomes more efficient — increasing tax revenues and reducing the cost of social safety net programs. For children, access to high-quality early education is associated with better quality of life, including academic success, lower rates of criminal justice involvement, better overall health,<sup>1</sup> and, later in life, increased labor force participation.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Long-term Effects of Early Childhood Education: Beyond Academics," Georgia Family Connection Partnership, Dec. 16, 2021

<sup>2</sup> "Economic Effects from Preschool and Childcare Programs," Penn Wharton University of Pennsylvania, Aug. 23, 2021

78%

of Region 5's ECE workforce earns less than \$15/hour

36%

of early childhood educators earn below the self-sufficiency standard for an individual without children

0.2%

Just 0.2% of early childhood educators earn enough to support the average family size in the region (one adult, one preschooler, one school-aged child)

## PAY THAT DOESN'T MEET BASIC NEEDS

Our analysis finds that 78% of Region 5's early care and education (ECE) workforce earns less than \$15 per hour. As a result, too many ECE workers must rely on public assistance programs to meet their basic needs. Many roles earn hourly wages comparable to median pay for jobs with very little education requirements, such as crossing guards and fast-food workers. In fact, 36% of early educators earn below the self-sufficiency standard for an individual without children, while just 0.2% earn enough to support the average family size in Region 5 (one adult, one preschooler, one school-aged child).

The comparatively low pay for these critical roles is not a problem exclusive to Region 5 but the impact here has been dramatic: **The region's ECE workforce shrank by 34.4% from 2001 to 2022, representing 1,630 fewer early educators across the region. This stands in stark contrast to the modest growth (0.3%) seen nationwide.**

ECE worker shortages are reducing availability and increasing costs, driving more parents to opt out of the workforce, as was the case for over 600,000 Michigan parents in 2021.

Investing in and reforming ECE compensation to move closer to a living wage is an important step toward reversing these shortcomings. This also provides a means to address racial and gender-based wealth disparities, given that women comprise over 91% of Michigan's ECE workforce, many of whom are women of color. For these reasons, the Michigan Department of Education has identified compensation as the most important factor of early childhood employment. The Early Childhood Investment Corporation and TalentFirst share in this priority.

## Region 5

This report analyzes existing ECE pay in Region 5 and proposes a systemwide wage scale that provides transparent and equitable wage lattices to bring ECE compensation closer to parity with comparable K-12 roles. The objective is to ensure an adequate supply of professional early childhood educators to meet the needs of Michigan's children, their parents, and our economy — while reducing the share of early educators who are reliant on public benefits.

# Key Findings

78%

of Region 5's early care and education (ECE) workforce earns less than \$15 per hour, despite a majority possessing education beyond high school. These roles are significantly underpaid given their education and experience requirements.

\$13.91

The current median hourly wage of Lead Teachers (\$13.91) ranks in the 12th percentile of all occupations in Michigan, the same ranking as Telemarketers, Food Servers, and Security Guards — all of which require only a high school diploma.

36%

of early educators earn below the self-sufficiency standard for an individual without children; just 0.2% earn enough to support the average family size in Region 5 (one adult, one preschooler, one school-aged child).

Despite a 97% overlap in required competencies, qualifications, and work activities, Kindergarten Teachers earn \$20.22 more per hour than Lead Teachers and have access to a host of benefits not available in the ECE environment.

Inadequate pay contributes to child care shortages that are harming the state's ability to compete. One estimate places the cost at \$2.88 billion in economic activity statewide per year.

When accounting for inflation, most roles in early care and education have actually seen significant declines in their wages since 2005, a period when pay for other occupations has risen.

Due to the system's cumbersome regulatory requirements and parents' role as primary customer, market forces have proved incapable of addressing Michigan's child care crisis. Michigan's child care system requires additional state and federal investment to place early educator compensation on par with comparable roles in the public K-12 system.

# The High Cost of Low Pay: A Shrinking Workforce



34.4%

Region 5's ECE workforce has decreased by 34.4% from 2001 to 2022, representing

1,630

fewer early educators across Region 5

While Michigan has made significant investments in child care in recent years – including the expansion of eligibility for subsidy support – many families, businesses, and providers are still left behind by the current funding system. A two-decade decline in the child care workforce has contributed to a loss of openings estimated to range from 6,500 to 19,600, depending on the age of the child.

Statewide, a recent study<sup>3</sup> by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation calculated that these shortages result in a loss of \$2.88 billion in economic activity per year.



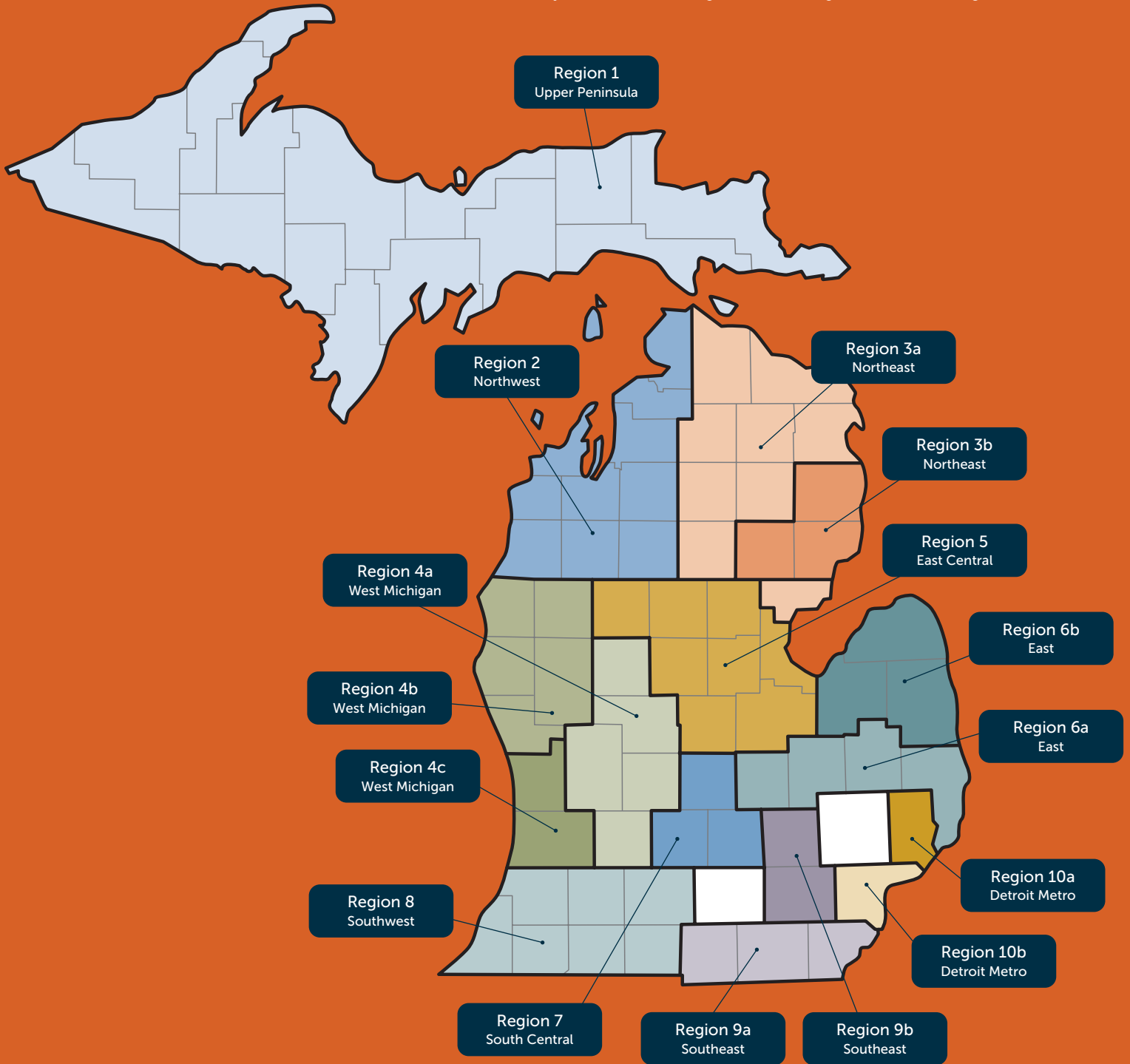
Child care shortages that force parents to leave the workforce are calculated to result in a loss of \$2.88 billion in economic activity statewide per year.

<sup>3</sup> "Untapped Potential: How Childcare Impacts Michigan's Workforce and Economy," U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, 2023, <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1qBTojrYNzzwENRpzzm-PcEPsfCkebtHy/view>



# A Regional Examination of ECE Wages

This report leverages public data sources to assess wages, employment trends, and other relevant characteristics of critical early childhood teaching roles for 16 regions<sup>4</sup> across Michigan.



<sup>4</sup> Regions are grouped by ECIC grantee organizations and the counties they cover. Note that Regions 3A and 3B have three counties (Alcona, Iosco, and Ogemaw) in common, while Regions 3b and 5 have one county (Arenac) in common. Two counties (Jackson and Oakland) are not represented.

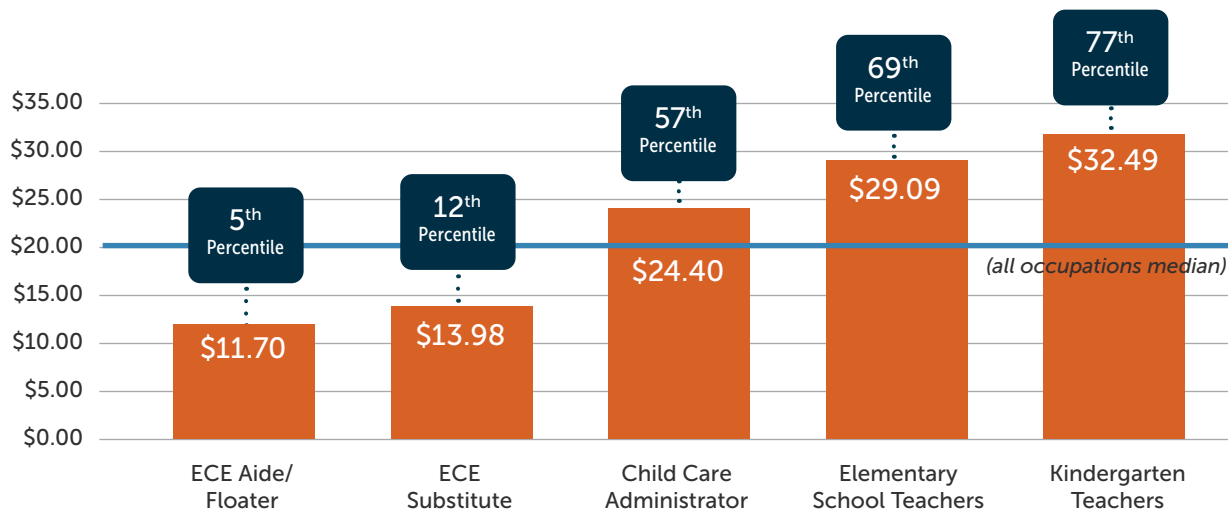


# Early Childhood Educator Pay Ranks Low

ECE wages in Region 5 remain substandard in comparison to similar K-12 teaching roles, which themselves are underpaid when compared to jobs requiring similar qualifications and skills. The whole ECE workforce, from the lowest-earning role (Aide/Floater) to the highest-earning (Lead Teacher), fits comfortably in the bottom quintile of Region 5's occupational wage distribution.

The current median hourly wage of Child Care Aides ranks in the 5th percentile of all occupations in the region, while the highest paid ECE teaching occupation, Substitutes, ranks in the 12th percentile. In comparison, Kindergarten Teachers rank in the 77th percentile.

Selected Occupations Ranked by Median Hourly Wage, Region 5, 2022

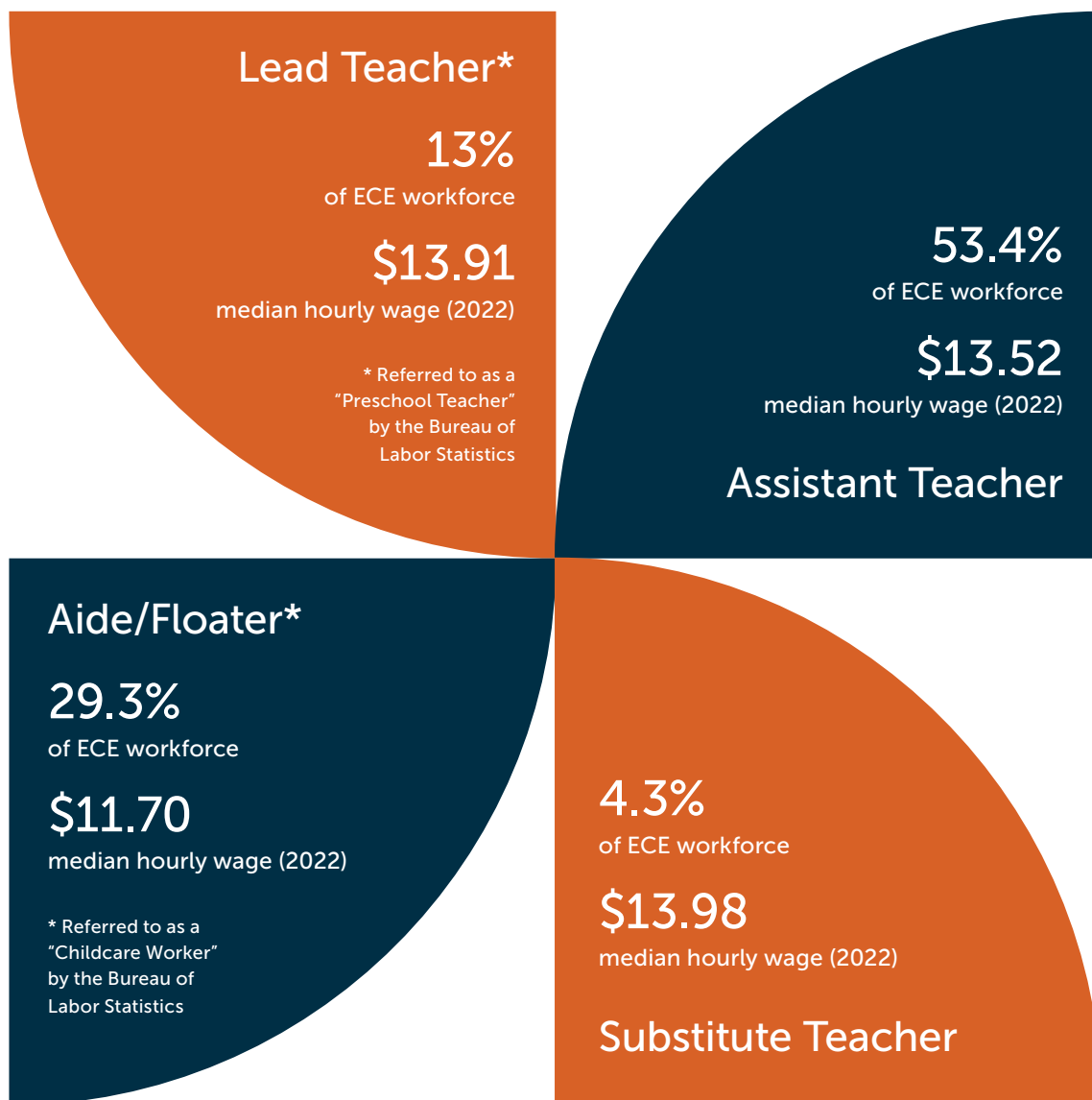


Source: Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics; All teacher estimates exclude special education teachers. Hourly wages for preschool teachers, kindergarten teachers, and elementary school teachers account for standard school schedules. All other occupations assume 40 hours per week, 12 months per year.

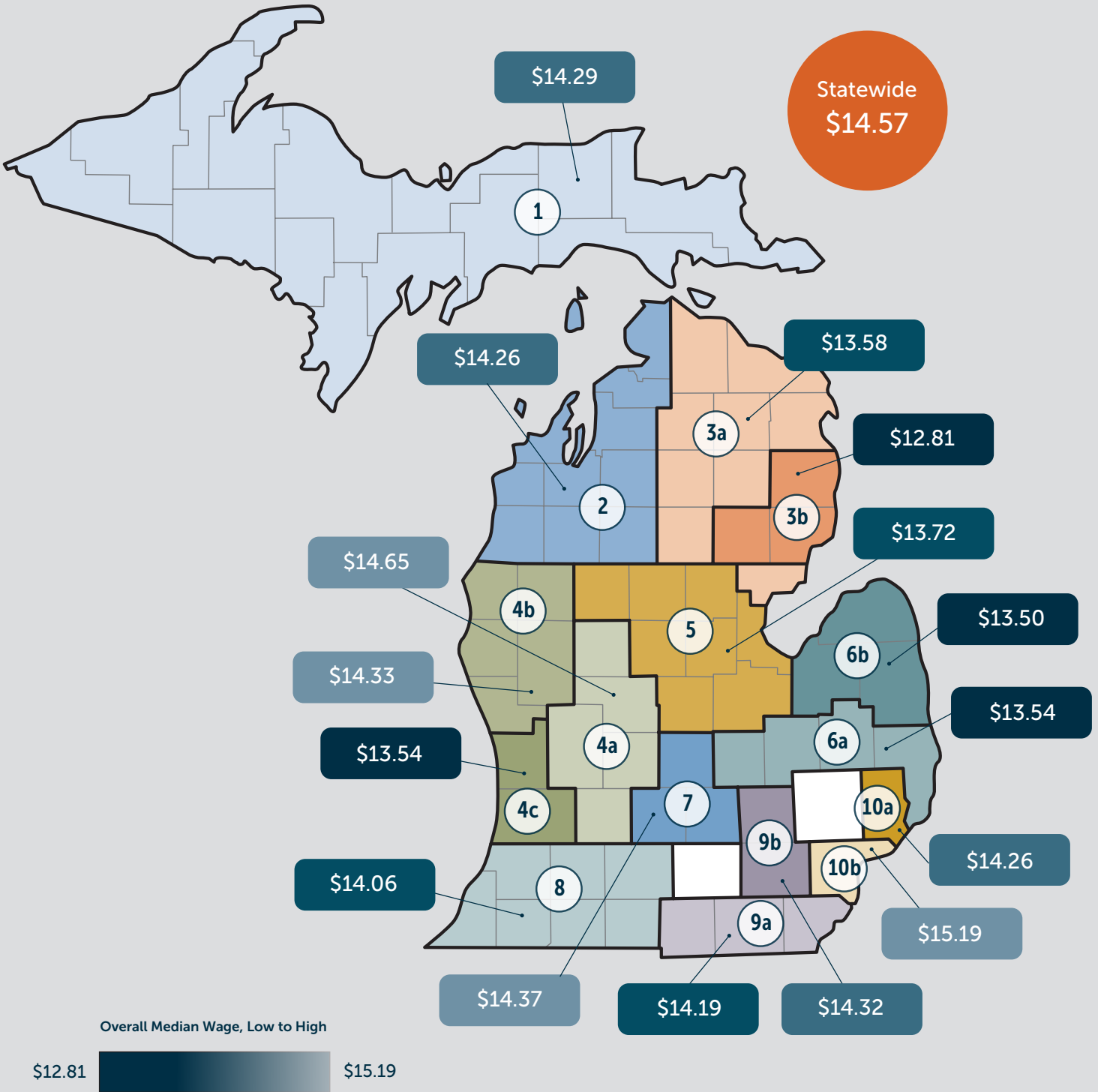
The wages detailed above do not factor in benefits, which widens existing inequalities. Most early childhood educators cannot access the same benefits as those offered through public K-12 settings – which can include retention, merit, and longevity bonuses, retirement plans, paid time off, and paid planning time.

# Breaking Down Pay by Role in Region 5

The early childhood classroom-based workforce can be segmented into four distinct categories: Lead Teachers, Assistant Teachers, Center Aides, and Substitute Teachers. Job titles vary across settings (school-based, center-based, family or group child care home) and organizations, but responsibilities and compensation remain largely the same.



Overall Median Hourly Wage of All Early Childhood Education Classroom Occupations, Statewide and by Region, Michigan, 2022







# Solution: A Unifying Framework for Early Educator Wages in Region 5



As defined by the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment at UC Berkeley, a wage scale is “a scale with clearly differentiated salary increments based on qualifications and years of experience, which provides guidance for salary increases over time.” Michigan’s ECE classroom workforce needs a unifying wage scale to provide transparent and equitable wage lattices across settings, making ECE a lucrative career where wages are commensurate with the education and skills required of these roles.

These proposed wage scales would likely need to follow the example of other states, which have taken an incremental approach, in recognition that immediate increases were not possible.

The framework for this wage scale, which benchmarks ECE wages against comparable K-12 roles, builds on existing models developed by the Corporation for a Skilled Workforce, in partnership with Hope Starts Here and TalentFirst. The scale provides guidance on what ECE professionals should be paid based on their geography, role, qualifications, and years of experience — regardless of setting — and provides guidance for wage and scaling increases over time. This is accomplished by setting the Lead Teacher wage on par with the starting salary of a K-12 teacher in Region 5 (adjusted for the standard school schedule), which serves as the base wage for the systemwide wage scale.

The proposed base wage for an Assistant Teacher and Substitute stands 25% below the base wage of a Lead Teacher, while the base wage for an Aide/Floater is 50% less than a Lead Teacher. This scaling reflects the accumulation of responsibility, knowledge, and experience that occurs along the ECE career pathway from Aide to Lead Teacher.

The systemwide wage scale is agnostic to setting (school-based, center-based, family or group child care home). Thus, wages are based on the specific role, professional level/education, and experience an individual has – irrespective of the setting in which they are employed.



2.5%



Early educators should receive a 2.5 % increase to their base wage each year of employment

**The base wages shown on the next page increase by 10% for each professional/educational level an individual has obtained above a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential.**

**This method encourages progression, which is strongly linked to quality, and helps account for the fact that licensing requirements vary across settings for these ECE roles.**

ECE professionals supervising infant- and toddler-aged children would receive a 10% increase from the base wage associated with that role supervising preschool-aged children. This wage bump reflects the intense level of supervision required for infants and toddlers compared to preschoolers, a presumption reinforced by the provider-to-child ratios set by the state – which become less restrictive as children age.

To account for longevity and keep pace with inflation, early educators should receive a 2.5% increase to their base wage for each year of employment. This reflects the average step increase offered to K-12 educators and is equal to the average rate of inflation expected in the state over the next 10 years – ensuring wages rise with the cost of living. It should be noted that step increases vary significantly across school districts, from as high as 5% to as low as 1%.

### Base Wages for Early Childhood Educators of Infants and Toddlers

Instructional Roles	Current Median Wage		Proposed Base Wage	Explanation for Proposed Base Wage*
	Hourly	Annual Pay <sup>5</sup> (52 weeks)		
Lead Teacher, Infant-Toddler	\$13.91	\$28,933	\$26.84	Median Hourly rate for Step 1 K-12 Teacher (\$40,987 a year) + 10%
Assistant Teacher, Infant-Toddler	\$13.52	\$28,122	\$20.13	25% less than Lead Teacher
Aide/floater, Infant-Toddler	\$11.70	\$24,336	\$15.10	25% less than Assistant Teacher
Substitute, Infant-Toddler	\$13.98	\$29,078	\$20.13	Parity with Assistant Teacher, with similar responsibilities (10% increase for long-term assignments)

\* Note: All Infant/Toddler instructional roles are 10% more than Preschool roles.

### Base Wages for Early Childhood Educators of Preschool-aged Children

Instructional Roles	Current Median Wage		Proposed Base Wage	Explanation for Proposed Base Wage*
	Hourly	Annual Pay <sup>5</sup> (52 weeks)		
Lead Teacher, Preschool	\$13.91	\$28,933	\$24.40	Median Hourly rate for Step 1 K-12 Teacher (\$40,987 a year)
Assistant Teacher, Preschool	\$13.91	\$28,122	\$18.30	25% less than Lead Teacher
Aide/floater, Preschool	\$11.70	\$24,336	\$13.72	25% less than Assistant Teacher
Substitute, Preschool	\$13.98	\$29,078	\$18.30	Parity with Assistant Teacher, with similar responsibilities (10% increase for long-term assignments)

\* Note: All Infant/Toddler instructional roles are 10% more than Preschool roles

While this approach sets ECE wages on par with educators in the public K-12 system, it's important to note that early educators will still lack parity with K-12 teachers, as the majority of early educators have limited or no access to benefits. Thus, total compensation in a K-12 setting will still significantly outpace ECE even if the wages paid to educators are identical, because the K-12 system has the resources to offer educators more generous benefit packages.

<sup>5</sup> Note: Early educators are not typically salaried but paid hourly, and hours worked can vary drastically from the standard full-time schedule. Annual salaries are included here to provide an estimate as to what each instructional role might earn over the course of a year to provide a comparison against similar salaried roles.



## Individual Roles:

# Lead Teachers

Lead Teachers in Region 5 – across settings, not only those in publicly funded pre-K, where earnings are higher – earned the second-highest median wage of any ECE occupation, at \$13.91 in 2022. Even so, this ranks only in the 12th percentile of all occupations in the region, meaning 88% of occupations in the region earn a higher median wage. Other occupations with median wages that fell in the 12th percentile in the region include Telemarketers, Food Servers, and Security Guards – all of which require only a high school diploma. By comparison, most ECE settings require Lead Teachers to have at least a child development associate (CDA) credential, while 35% of the workforce has a Bachelor’s degree.

## \$13.91

Lead Teachers earned the second-highest median wage of any ECE occupation in the region, \$13.91 per hour in 2022



## 88%

of all occupations in the region earn a higher median wage, placing Lead Teachers in the 12th percentile

## 73%

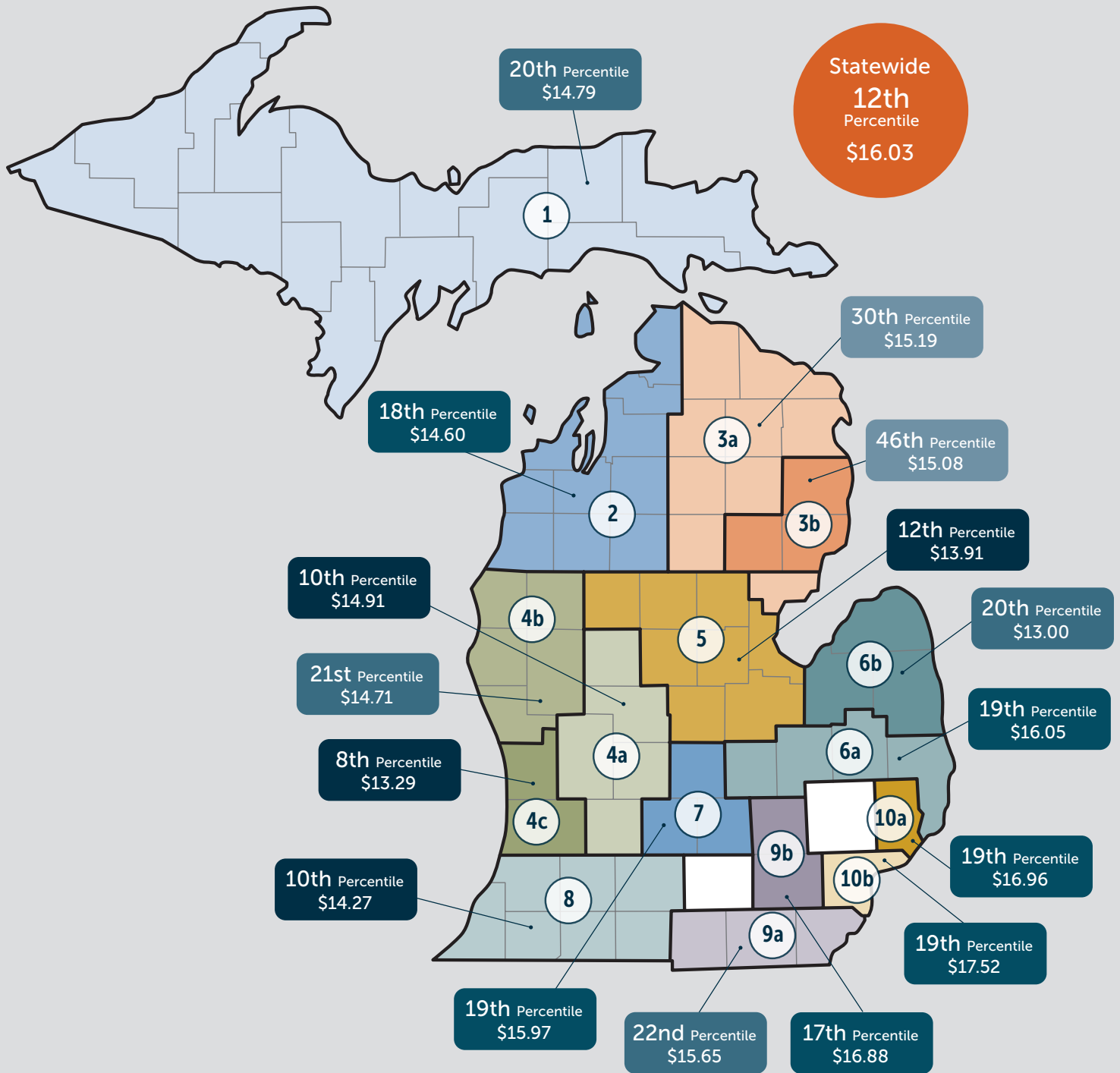
of Lead Teachers in dual-income households must rely on some form of public assistance

### Overview of Employment and Wages for Lead Teachers

Employment (2022)	Employment Trend		Current Median Earnings	Proposed Base Wage	
	Past Growth (2001-2022)	Projected Growth (2022-2032)		Preschool	Infant-Toddler
405	 (-4.26%)	 (26.5%)	\$13.91 Hourly, 2022	\$24.40	\$26.84

Although the median wage of Lead Teachers is the second-highest in the ECE workforce, it’s just over half of the living wage of \$26.75 required to sustain the average family size in Region 5 (one adult, one preschooler, one school-aged child) in 2022. As such, **approximately 73% of Lead Teachers in the region are not capable of being financially self-sufficient in dual-income households and must rely on some form of public assistance. That share rises to 100% for Lead Teachers in single-income households.**

Percentile Ranking of Lead Teacher Median Wage Compared to All 797 Occupations in Region, 2022



Percentile Ranking, Low to High



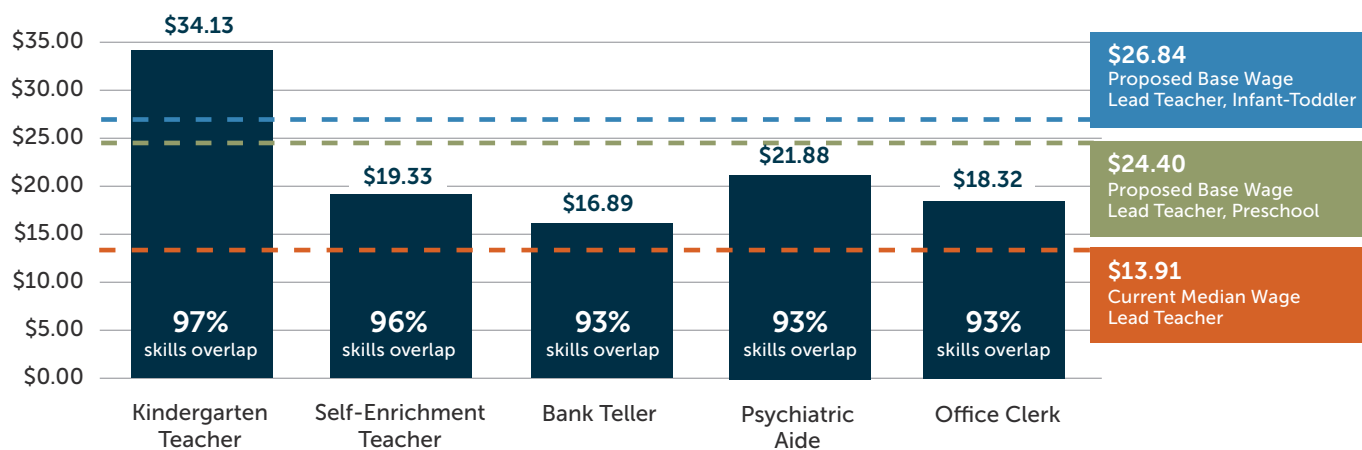
## Lead Teacher Wages Fall Significantly Below Comparable Roles

When it comes to roles that require similar competencies and skills as ECE Lead Teachers, Kindergarten Teachers are at the top of the list. Most Lead Teachers could transition into this role without much upskilling or reskilling because they require 97% of the same competencies, have similar work environments, and have similar educational qualifications as Lead Teachers in school-based settings. Despite this near perfect match – and the fact that infants and toddlers require more intense supervision than 5-year-olds – the current median wage of Kindergarten Teachers stands 145% higher than Lead Teachers in Region 5, even without accounting for benefits.



Self-Enrichment Teachers provide instruction to students in subjects that aren't academic or vocational, but tend to be more recreational – including art, dance, yoga, and various sports. These roles require 96% of the same skills as Lead Teachers and earn \$5.42 more per hour at the median. One notable difference, aside from the age range of the students receiving instruction, is that Self-Enrichment Teachers don't require education beyond high school – making any Lead Teacher qualified to transition into this job.

**Median Wage of Most Similar Roles and Share of Overlapping Skills  
Lead Teacher, Region 5, 2022**



Psychiatric Aides earn a median wage **\$7.97 higher** than Lead Teachers in Region 5.

Aside from Kindergarten Teachers, none of the top occupations that are most comparable to Lead Teachers require any education beyond high school, and all are associated with higher earning potential.

Psychiatric Aides, for example, undergo short on-the-job training to help individuals who have mental health or developmental disabilities complete daily activities like dressing, eating, or bathing. These activities are not dissimilar to those performed by a Lead Teacher, who have additional responsibilities, including being entrusted with developmental education of young children. And yet, Psychiatric Aides earn a median wage \$7.97 higher than Lead Teachers in Region 5.

Current wage gaps between Lead Teachers and similar roles in Region 5 range from \$2.98 to \$20.22. However, there is evidence to suggest these disparities will continue to widen without significant intervention. Since 2005, the earliest accessible wage record, Lead Teacher wages have only risen by \$6.00. That's \$0.94 below wage growth of the next slowest-growing role, Bank Tellers, and \$3.77 below the fastest-growing role, Psychiatric Aides.



Given that \$1 in 2005 has the same purchasing power as \$1.57 in 2022, the real rate of growth for Lead Teacher wages stands at 26% — meaning Lead Teachers earned about \$2.06 more per hour in 2022 than they did in 2005 after accounting for inflation. In comparison, Psychiatric Aides saw a 31% growth in their purchasing power, which equates to about \$3.73 more per hour.

# Proposed Wage Scaling of Lead Teachers in Region 5

Wages shown on the opposite page reflect the entry-level, base hourly wage for a Lead Teacher of preschool-aged children with the given educational qualification in Region 5. The base wage should increase by 2.5% for every year of employment. Thus, a Lead Teacher of preschool-aged children with an associate degree and six years of experience should earn a wage of \$31.12.

## ECE Teaching Occupations

The ECE framework is founded on the work of the national Power to the Profession Task Force, which in 2019 adopted a unifying framework of ECE I, II, and III, reflecting standards and competencies for the early childhood education profession:

### ECE I – Certificate/Apprenticeship

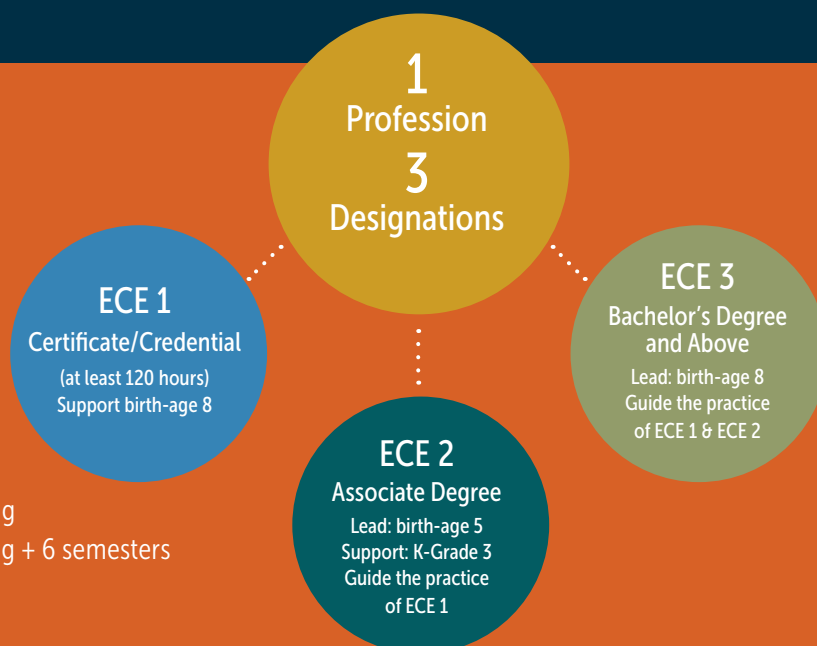
- F1: High School Diploma/GED
- F2: High School Diploma/GED + 60 hrs of training
- F3: High School Diploma/GED + 90 hrs of training + 6 semesters
- P1: CDA + 12 semesters
- P1.5: CDA + Apprenticeship Certificate

### ECE 2 – Associate Degree/Apprenticeship

- P2: Associate degree in ECE/related field
- P2.5: Associate degree + Apprenticeship Certificate

### ECE 3 – Bachelor’s Degree and Above

- P3: Bachelor’s degree in ECE or related field + 30 credit hours in ECE
- P4: Master’s degree in ECE or related field
- P5: Ph.D. or Ed.D. in ECE or related field

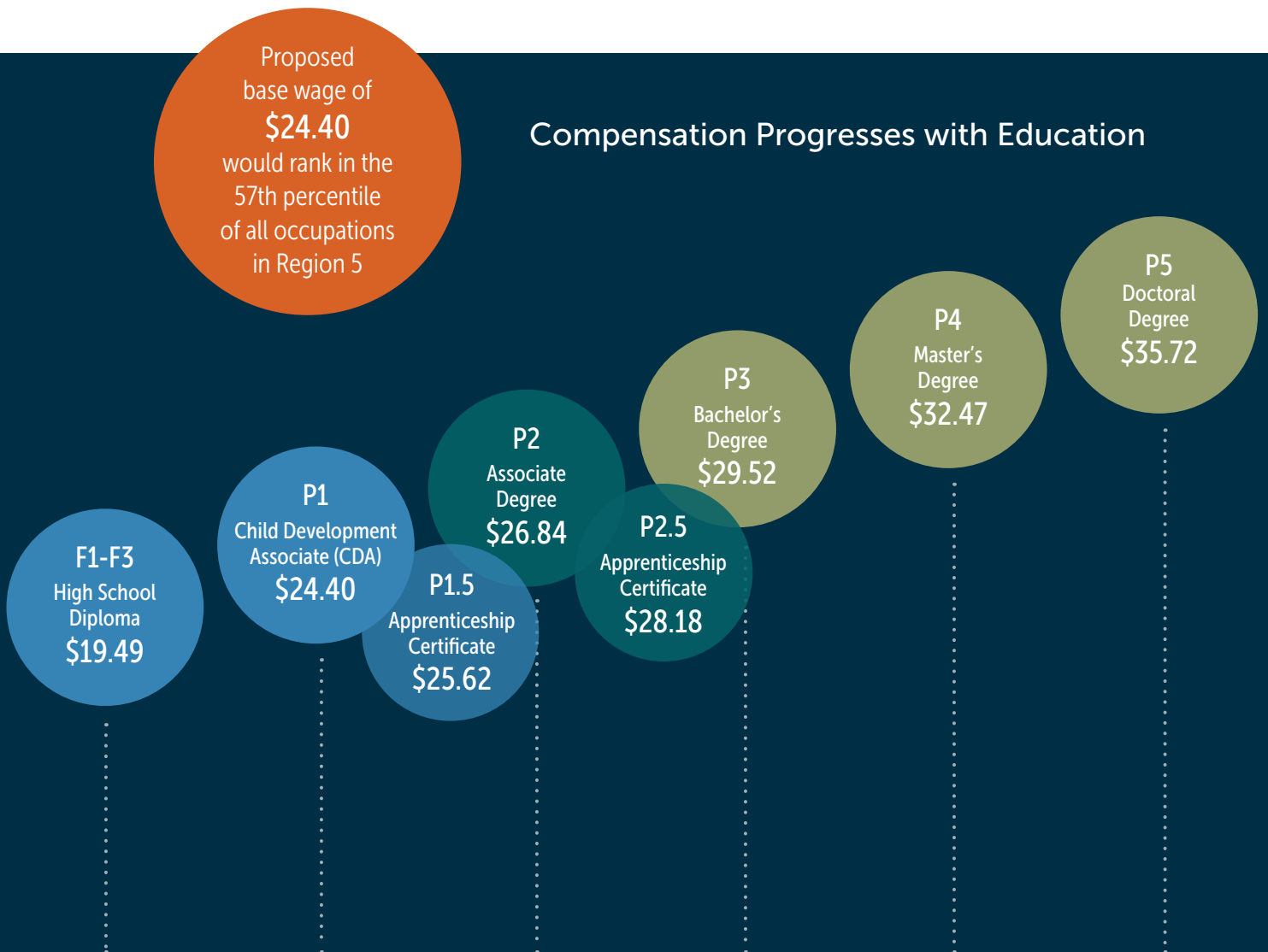


*F1-P5 designations come from MiRegistry, Michigan’s professional development registry for the early childhood and school age workforce.*

## Lead Teacher Minimum Qualifications Across Settings

School-based including Head Start & GSRP	Child Care Centers	Family Care Centers
Bachelor’s degree with at least 18 hours in Early Childhood Education; sometimes requires valid Michigan teaching certificate	High school diploma and Child Development Associate (CDA) credential	High school diploma + one college course in Early Childhood Education or 20 hours of training

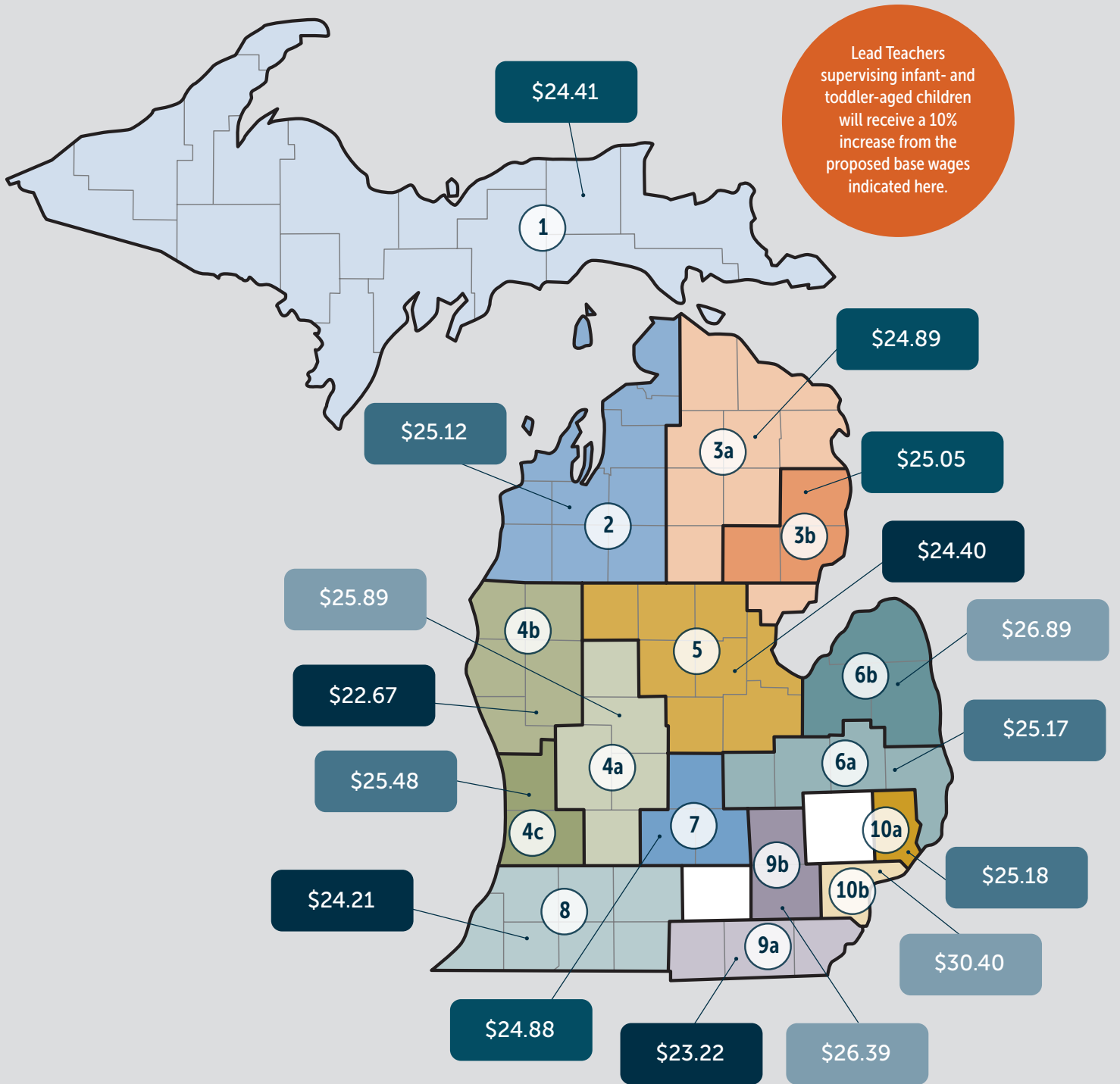
## Compensation Progresses with Education



ECE professionals supervising infant- and toddler-aged children will receive a 10% increase from the base wage associated with that role supervising preschool-aged children. Thus, a Lead Teacher of infants and toddlers with a bachelor's degree should earn a base wage of \$32.47.

## Proposed Base Wages for Lead Teachers, per Region, Preschool

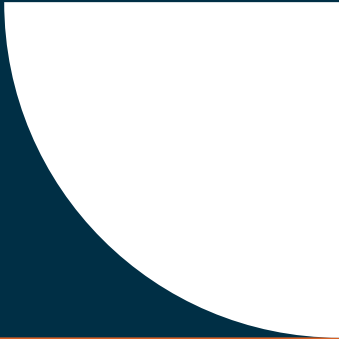
(Base wages reflect the entry-level salary for a Lead Teacher with a child development associate (CDA) credential.)



Proposed Wages, Low to High







## Individual Roles:

# Assistant Teachers

Assistant Teachers in Region 5 – across settings, not only those in publicly funded pre-K, where earnings are higher – earned the second-lowest median wage of any ECE occupation, at \$13.52 in 2022. This ranks in the 10th percentile of all occupations in the region, meaning 90% of occupations earn a higher median wage. Other occupations with median wages that fell in the 10th percentile include Bartenders, Hotel Desk Clerks, and Couriers – all of which require only a high school diploma.

## \$13.52

Assistant Teachers earned the second-lowest median wage of any ECE occupation in the region at \$13.52 per hour in 2022



## 90%

of all occupations in the region earn a higher median wage, placing Assistant Teachers in the 10th percentile

## 80%

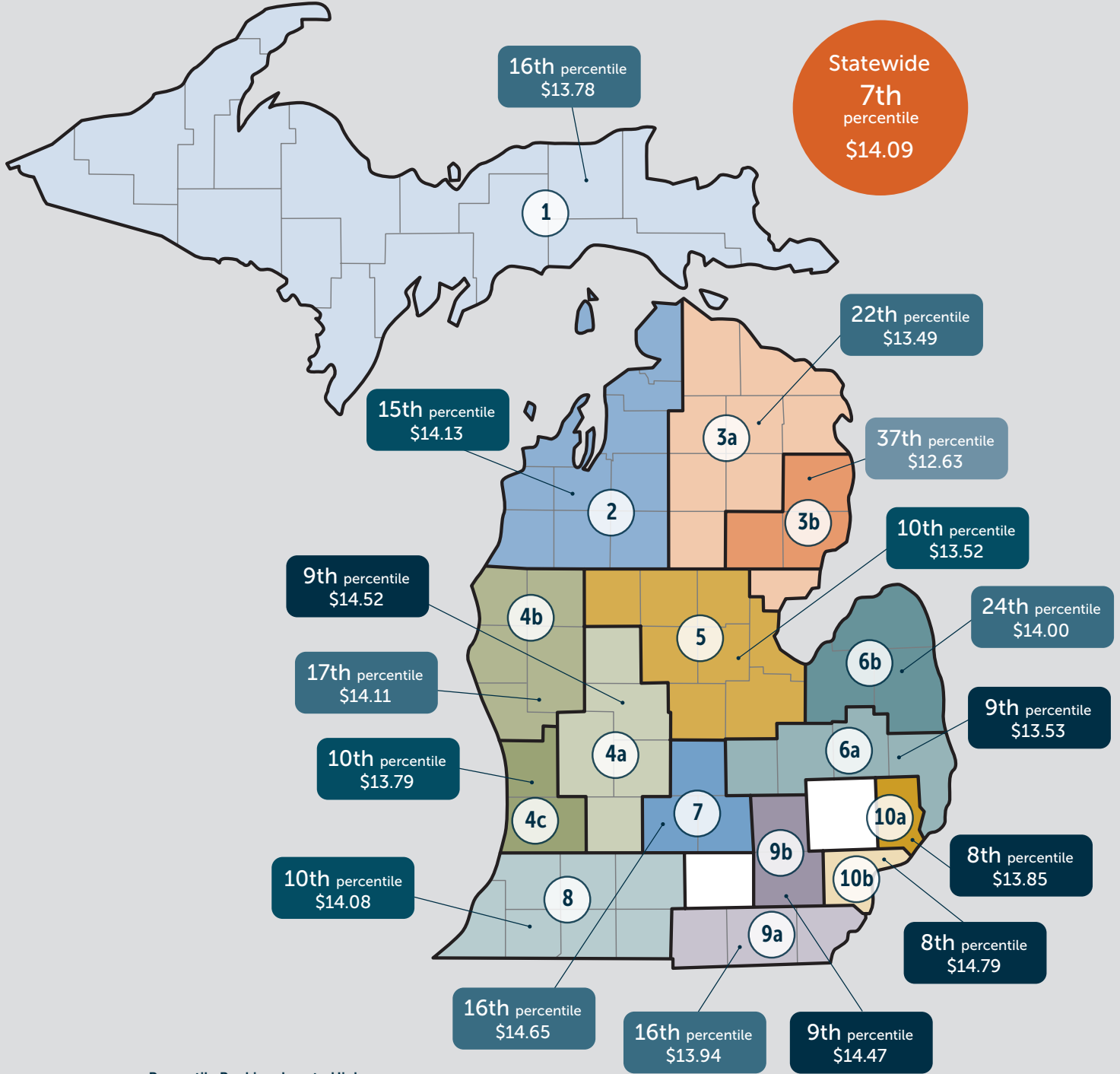
of Assistant Teachers in dual-income households must rely on some form of public assistance

### Overview of Employment and Wages for Assistant Teachers

Employment (2022)	Employment Trend		Current Median Earnings	Proposed Base Wage	
	Past Growth (2001-2022)	Projected Growth (2022-2032)		Preschool	Infant-Toddler
1,657	 (-20.6)	 (7.7%)	\$13.52 Hourly, 2022	\$18.30	\$20.13

The median wage associated with Assistant Teachers is just over half the living wage of \$26.75 required to sustain the average family size in the region (one adult, one preschooler, one school-aged child) in 2022. As such, **80% of Assistant Teachers are not capable of being financially self-sufficient in dual-income households and must rely on public assistance programs.** That percentage rises to 100% for Assistant Teachers who are the sole breadwinner in their family.

Percentile Ranking of Assistant Teacher Median Wage Compared to All 797 Occupations in Region, 2022



Percentile Ranking, Low to High

8th



37th

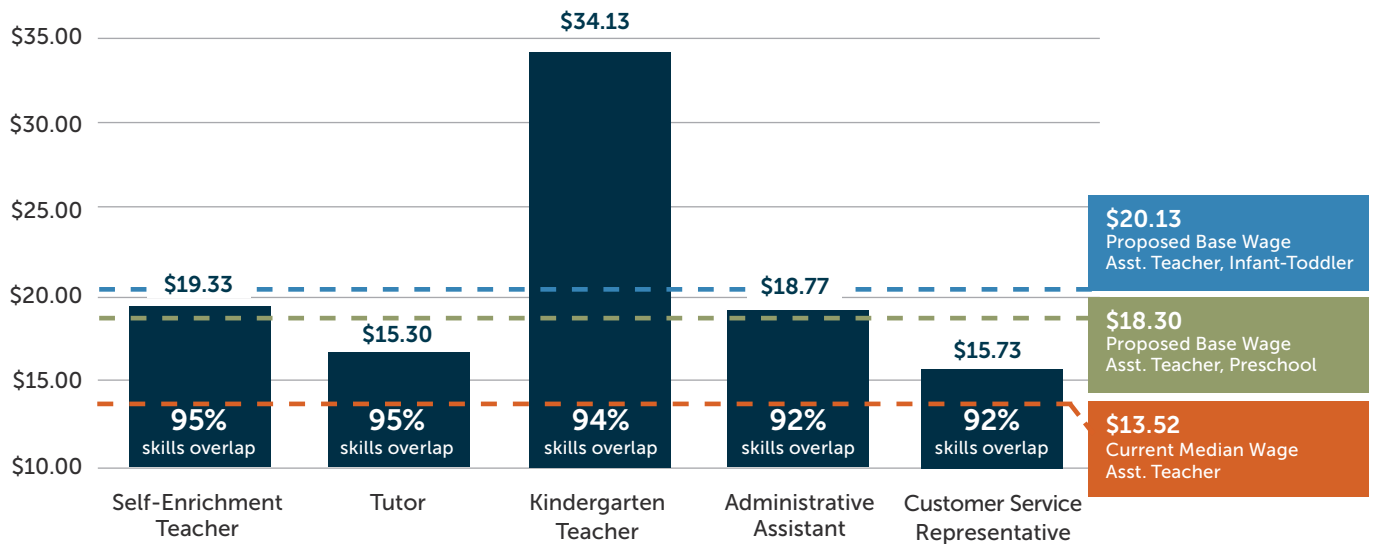
# Assistant Teacher Wages Fall Significantly Below Comparable Roles

When it comes to roles that require similar competencies and skills as ECE Assistant Teachers, Self-Enrichment Teachers are at the top of the list. Self-Enrichment Teachers provide instruction to students in subjects that aren't academic or vocational but tend to be more recreational – including sports, art, dance, and yoga. Assistant Teachers could easily transition into this role without any upskilling or reskilling because they require 95% of the same competencies, have similar work environments, and only require a high school diploma. Despite the stark difference in qualifications and similar skills required of both roles, Self-Enrichment Teachers in Region 5 earn a median hourly wage \$5.81 above Assistant Teachers.



Like Lead Teachers, Assistant Teachers also require similar skills and qualifications as Kindergarten Teachers – with 94% of required competencies overlapping. Yet, Assistant Teacher wages are less than half of those offered to K-12 educators.

**Median Wage of Most Similar Roles and Share of Overlapping Skills  
Assistant Teacher, Region 5, 2022**



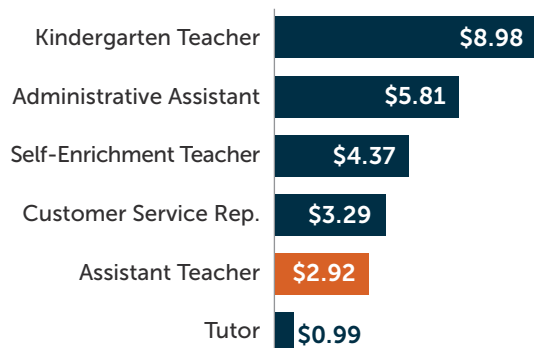
Assistant Teachers earned about **\$2.36 less** per hour in 2022 than they did in 2005 when accounting for inflation.

Four out of five occupations on the list of top comparable roles could be considered entry-level positions, as they serve as the first job one would take before advancing along their respective career pathway. This stands in stark contrast to an Assistant Teacher, which is the mid-level role found in the ECE career path.

Yet, each comparable entry-level position offers a higher median wage than an Assistant Teacher, ranging from \$1.78 above to \$20.61 above. Over the course of a year, that could add up to over \$3,702 or \$42,879 more in gross earnings for an Assistant Teacher.

Wage growth for all but two comparable roles exceeds that of Assistant Teachers over the 17-year period since 2005. Differences in wage increases range significantly across roles, with the median wage of Kindergarten Teachers rising \$6.03 more than Assistant Teachers over the respective period. Conversely, the median wage of Tutors has risen just \$0.99 since 2005 – but still exceeding that of Assistant Teachers.

**Median Wage Growth, Region 5  
2005-2022**



Given that \$1 in 2005 has the same purchasing power as \$1.57 in 2022, the real rate of growth for Assistant Teacher wages stands at -22% – meaning Assistant Teachers earned about \$2.36 less per hour in 2022 than they did in 2005, after accounting for inflation.

# Proposed Wage Scaling of Assistant Teachers in Region 5

Wages shown on the opposite page reflect the entry-level, base hourly wage for an Assistant Teacher of preschool-aged children with the given educational qualification in Region 5. The base wage should increase by 2.5% for every year of employment. Thus, an Assistant Teacher of preschool-aged children with an associate degree and six years of experience should earn a wage of \$23.34.

## ECE Teaching Occupations

The ECE framework is founded on the work of the national Power to the Profession Task Force, which in 2019 adopted a unifying framework of ECE I, II, and III, reflecting standards and competencies for the early childhood education profession:

### ECE I – Certificate/Apprenticeship

- F1: High School Diploma/GED
- F2: High School Diploma/GED + 60 hrs of training
- F3: High School Diploma/GED + 90 hrs of training + 6 semesters
- P1: CDA + 12 semesters
- P1.5: CDA + Apprenticeship Certificate

### ECE 2 – Associate Degree/Apprenticeship

- P2: Associate degree in ECE/related field
- P2.5: Associate degree + Apprenticeship Certificate

### ECE 3 – Bachelor’s Degree and Above

- P3: Bachelor’s degree in ECE or related field + 30 credit hours in ECE
- P4: Master’s degree in ECE or related field
- P5: Ph.D. or Ed.D. in ECE or related field

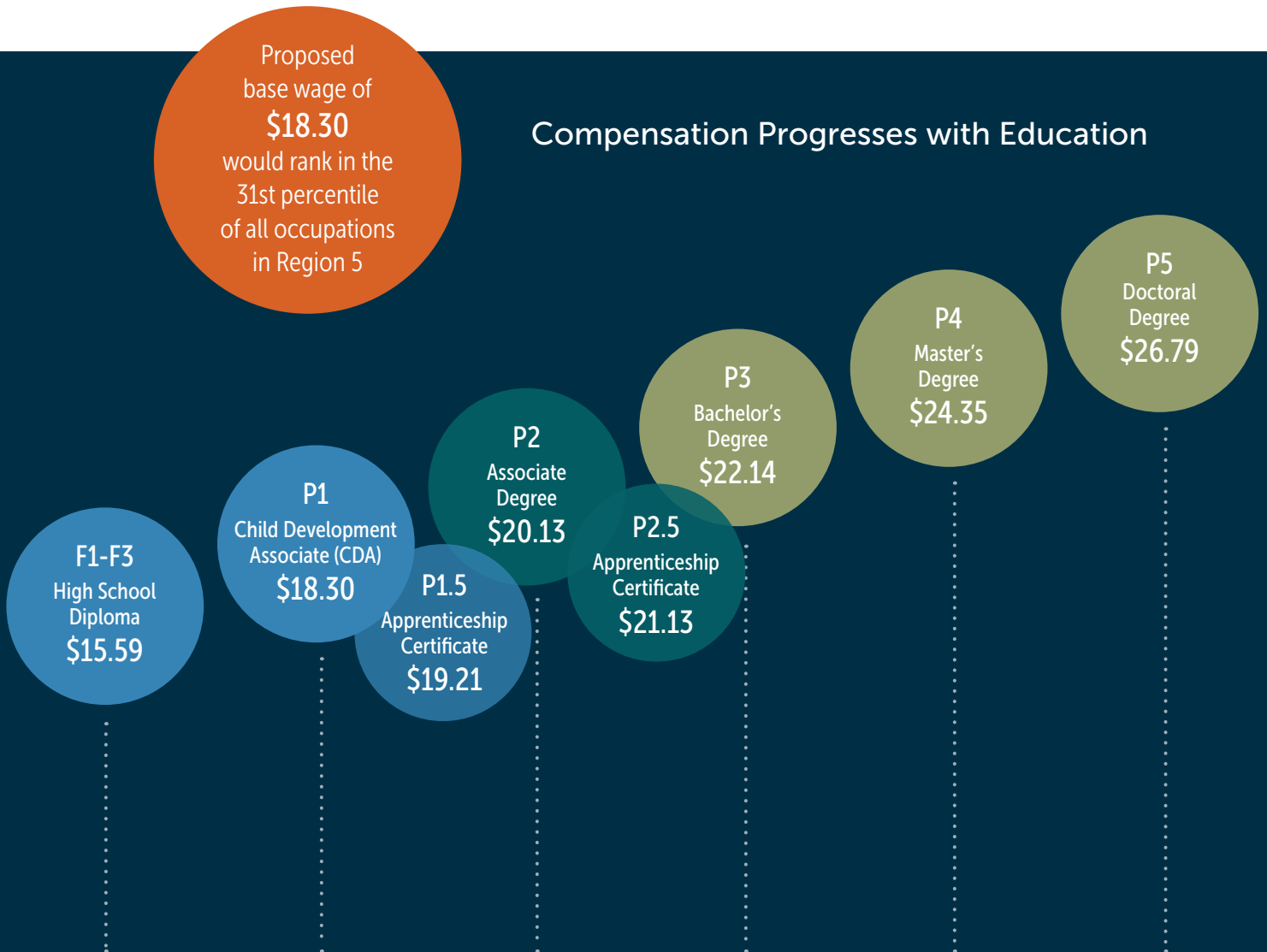


*F1-P5 designations come from MiRegistry, Michigan’s professional development registry for the early childhood and school age workforce.*

## Assistant Teacher Minimum Qualifications Across Settings

School-based including Head Start & GSRP	Child Care Centers	Family Care Centers
High school diploma + Child Development Associate (CDA) credential	High school diploma + one college course in Early Childhood Education or 20 hours of training	High school diploma + one college course in Early Childhood Education or 20 hours of training

## Compensation Progresses with Education

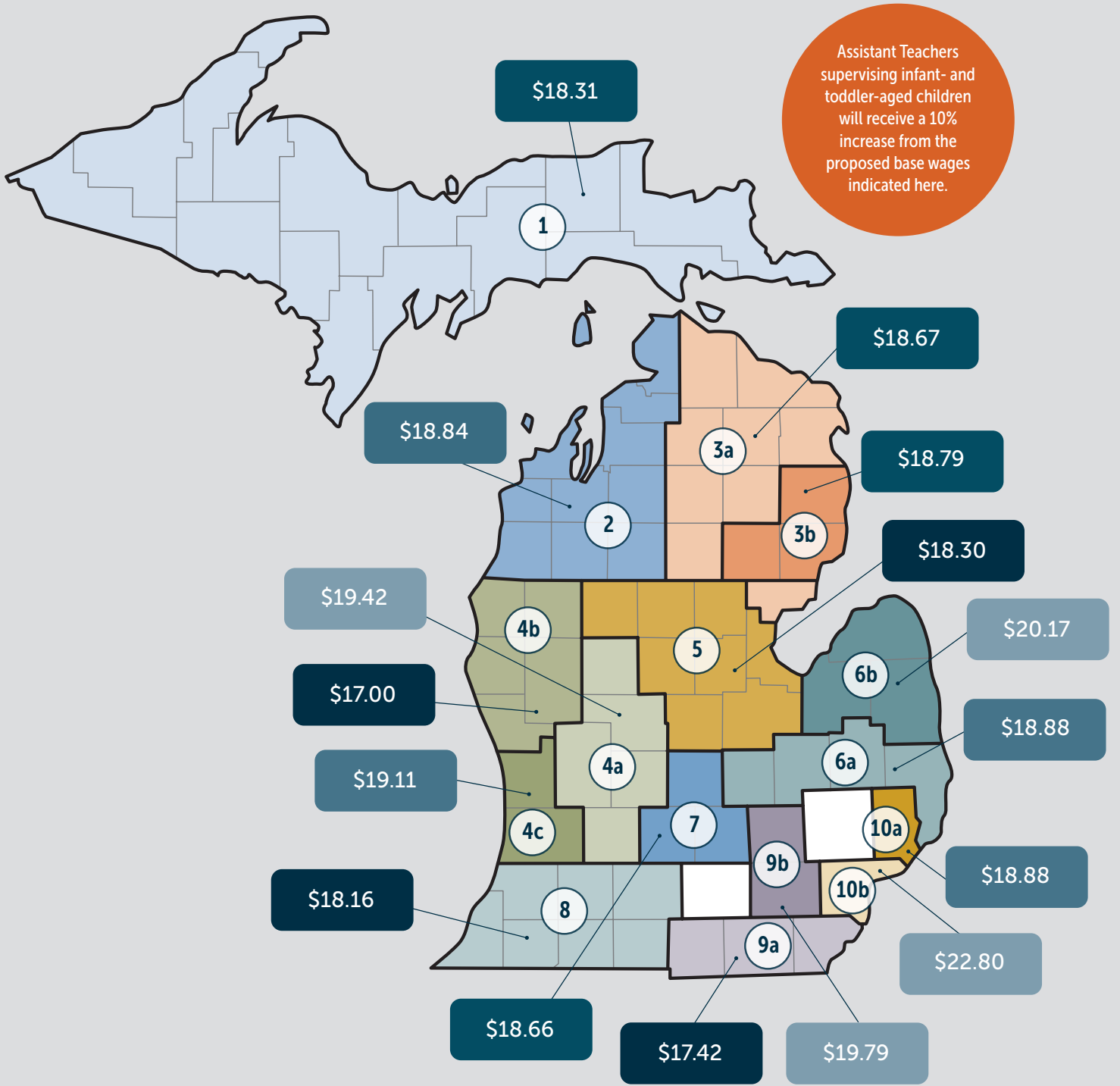


ECE professionals supervising infant- and toddler-aged children will receive a 10% increase from the base wage associated with that role supervising preschool-aged children. Thus, an Assistant Teacher of infants and toddlers with a bachelor's degree should earn a base wage of \$24.35.



## Proposed Base Wages for Assistant Teachers, per Region, Preschool

(Base wages reflect the entry-level salary for an Assistant Teacher with a child development associate (CDA) credential.)

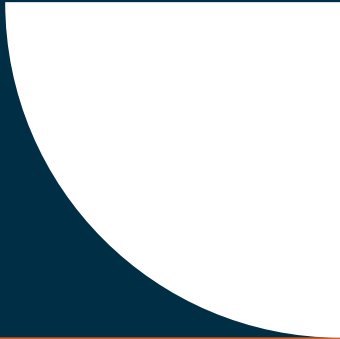


Proposed Wages, Low to High

\$17.00



\$22.80



## Individual Roles: Aides/Floaters

Center Aides, commonly referred to as Floaters, make up 29.3% of the ECE workforce in Region 5 and have the lowest threshold for entry compared to any other ECE role – explaining why they have the lowest median wage at \$11.70 in 2022. This ranks in the 5th percentile of all occupations in the region, meaning 95% of occupations offer a higher median wage. Other occupations with median wages that fell in the 5th percentile include Fast Food Workers, Ushers, and Short Order Cooks – which typically have no formal education requirement.

# \$11.70

Center Aides have the lowest median wage of any ECE occupation in the region, at \$11.70 per hour in 2022



# 95%

of all occupations in the region earn a higher median wage, placing Center Aides in the 5th percentile

# 95%

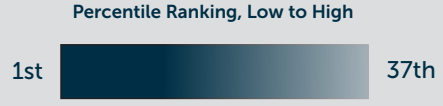
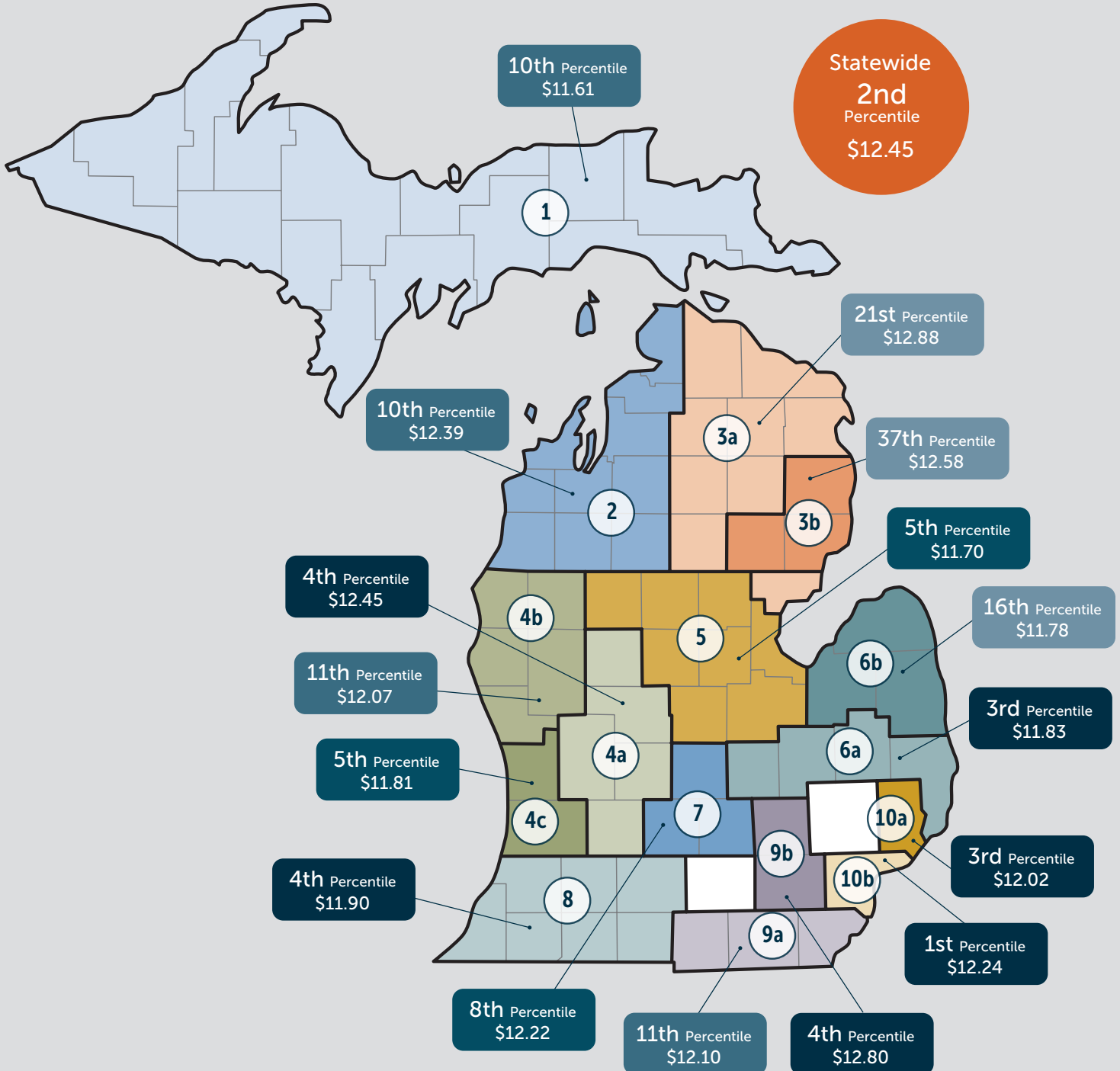
of Center Aides in a dual-income household must rely on some form of public assistance

Overview of Employment and Wages for Center Aides/Floaters

Employment (2022)	Employment Trend		Current Median Earnings	Proposed Base Wage	
	Past Growth (2001-2022)	Projected Growth (2022-2032)		Preschool	Infant-Toddler
910	 (-12%)	 (1.7%)	\$11.70 Hourly, 2022	\$13.72	\$15.10

Considering the median wage of Aides/Floaters is the lowest in the ECE workforce, it should come as no surprise that **approximately 95% of Aides/Floaters in Region 5 earn less than the self-sufficiency standard to support the average family size in the region, in a dual-income household. Thus, all early childhood Aides in single-income households must rely on public assistance programs.**

Percentile Ranking of Aides/Floaters Median Wage Compared to All 797 Occupations in Region, 2022



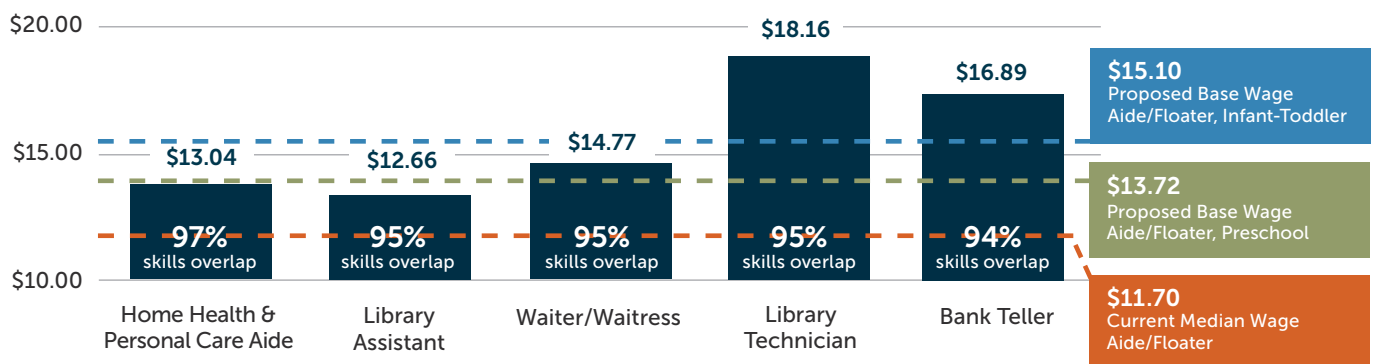
# Aide/Floater Wages Fall Significantly Below Comparable Roles

Home Health and Personal Care Aides help people with disabilities or chronic illnesses complete daily living activities. Although they don't do much educating, and tend to provide care to older patients rather than young children, they require 97% of the same competencies as ECE Aides. Not only does this alternative career option provide higher pay, but it also has less stringent education requirements – typically just a high school diploma, where ECE Aides generally need a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential or 12 credits toward attaining one, depending on the setting.



Library Technicians are the only top comparable occupation that requires a postsecondary certificate, placing them on par with the typical education required of ECE Aides. Despite having similar educational qualifications, Library Technicians in Region 5 earn a median wage \$6.46 higher than ECE Aides.

**Median Wage of Most Similar Roles and Share of Overlapping Skills Aide/Floater, Region 5, 2022**



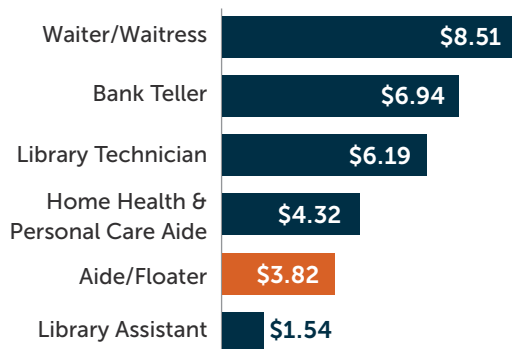
Aides/Floaters earned only **\$0.11 less** per hour in 2022 than they did in 2005 when accounting for inflation.

Library Technicians aside, none of the top occupations that are most comparable to Aides/Floaters require any education beyond high school, and all are associated with higher earning potential.

Bank Tellers, for example, typically receive about 1 month of on-the-job training and have a low bar to entry, which includes a high school diploma and potentially a background check, depending on the bank. Although it may seem like this role is very different from an ECE Aide, they require similar levels of communication, attention to detail, service orientation, and social perception. Yet, Bank Tellers earn \$5.19 more per hour, making them a logical alternative option for an ECE Aide. Over the course of a year, that could add up to an additional \$10,795 in gross earnings for an Aide/Floater.

Given that \$1 in 2005 has the same purchasing power as \$1.57 in 2022, the real rate of growth for ECE Aide wages stands at -1% — meaning Aides earned about \$0.11 less per hour in 2022 than they did in 2005 after accounting for inflation. In comparison, Waiters and Waitresses saw a 86% growth in their purchasing power, which equates to about \$5.39 more per hour.

**Median Wage Growth, Region 5  
2005-2022**



# Proposed Wage Scaling of Aides/Floaters in Region 5

Wages shown on the opposite page reflect the entry-level, base hourly wage for an Aide/Floater of preschool-aged children with the given educational qualification in Region 5. The base wage should increase by 2.5% for every year of employment. Thus, an Aide/Floater of preschool-aged children with an Associate degree and six years of experience should earn a wage of \$17.51.

## ECE Teaching Occupations

The ECE framework is founded on the work of the national Power to the Profession Task Force, which in 2019 adopted a unifying framework of ECE I, II, and III, reflecting standards and competencies for the early childhood education profession:

### ECE I – Certificate/Apprenticeship

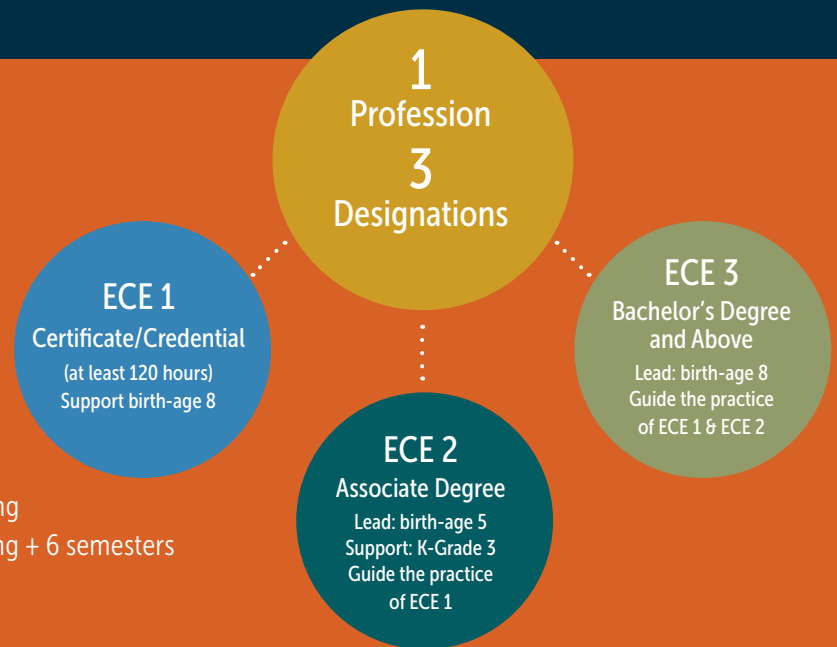
- F1: High School Diploma/GED
- F2: High School Diploma/GED + 60 hrs of training
- F3: High School Diploma/GED + 90 hrs of training + 6 semesters
- P1: CDA + 12 semesters
- P1.5: CDA + Apprenticeship Certificate

### ECE 2 – Associate Degree/Apprenticeship

- P2: Associate degree in ECE/related field
- P2.5: Associate degree + Apprenticeship Certificate

### ECE 3 – Bachelor’s Degree and Above

- P3: Bachelor’s degree in ECE or related field + 30 credit hours in ECE
- P4: Master’s degree in ECE or related field
- P5: Ph.D. or Ed.D. in ECE or related field



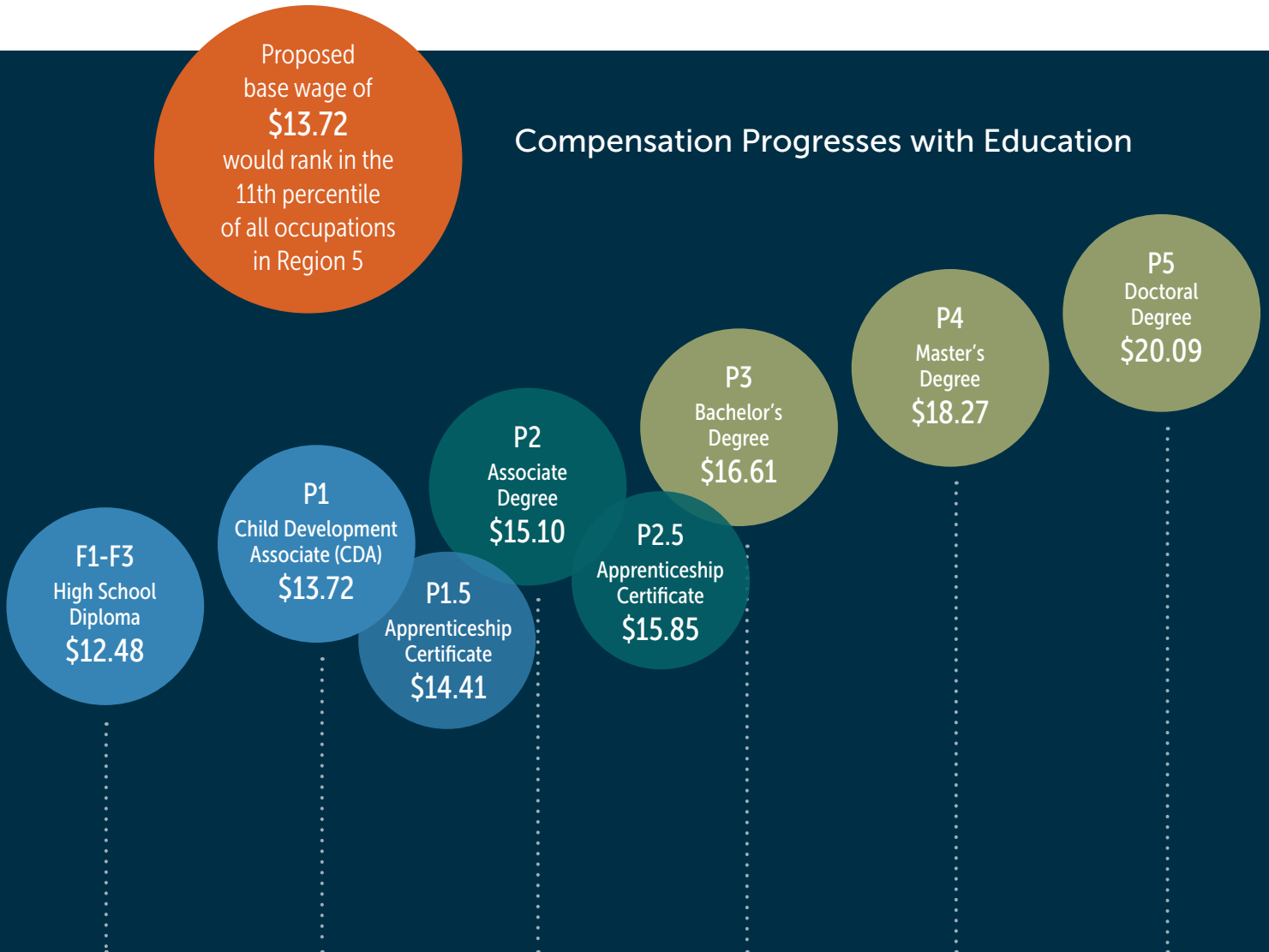
*F1-P5 designations come from MiRegistry, Michigan’s professional development registry for the early childhood and school age workforce.*

## Child Care Aide Minimum Qualifications Across Settings

School-based including Head Start & GSRP	Child Care Centers	Family Care Centers
High school diploma + Child Development Associate (CDA) credential or up to 2 Child Development credits	High school diploma + 12 early childhood education credit hours	High school diploma



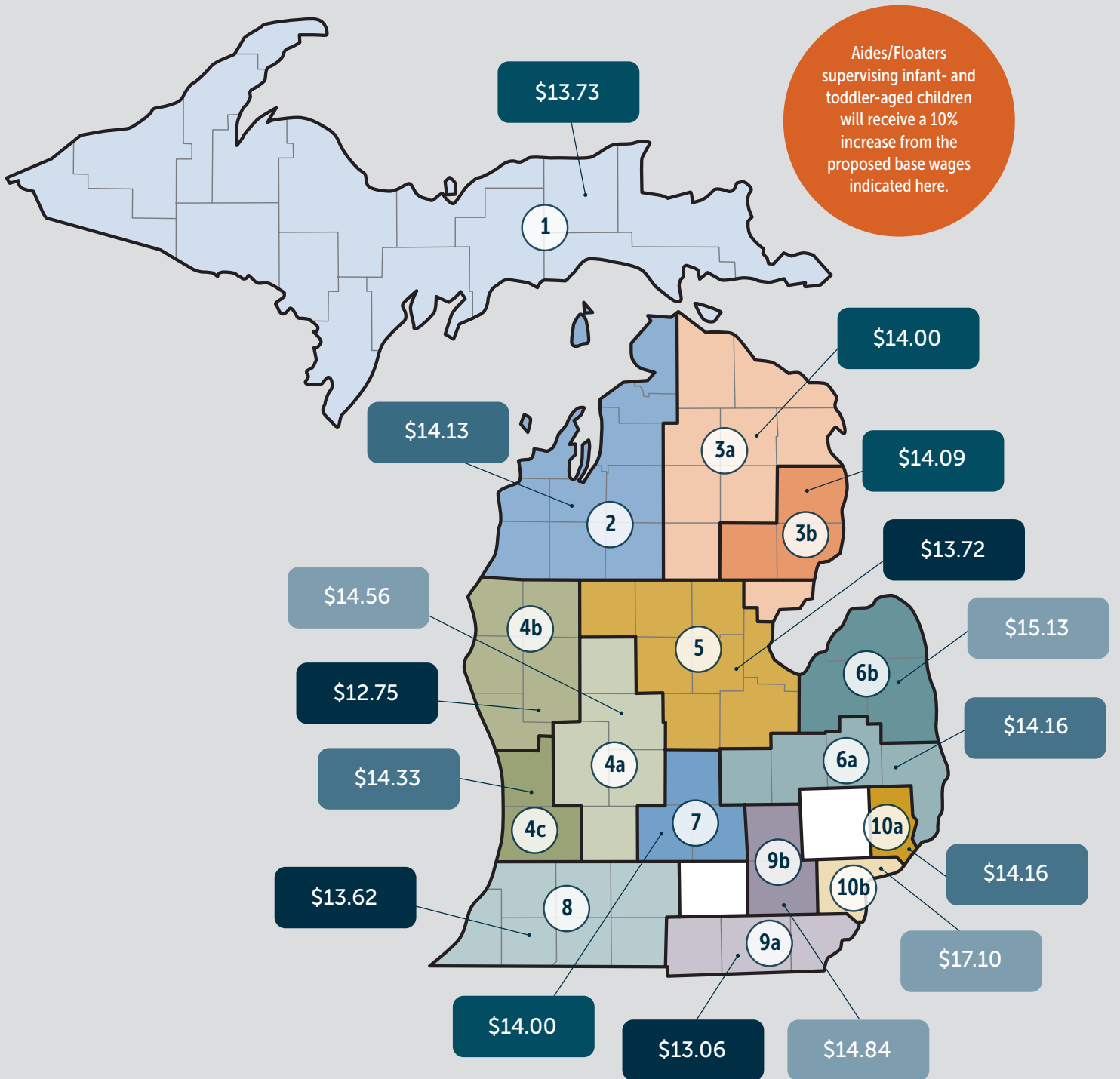
## Compensation Progresses with Education



ECE professionals supervising infant- and toddler-aged children will receive a 10% increase from the base wage associated with that role supervising preschool-aged children. Thus, an Aide/Floater of infants and toddlers with a Bachelor's degree should earn a base wage of \$18.27.

## Proposed Base Wages for Aides/Floaters, per Region, Preschool

(Base wages reflect the entry-level salary for Aides/Floaters with a child development associate (CDA) credential.)



Proposed Wages, Low to High

\$12.75  \$17.10



## Individual Roles:

# Substitutes

Substitutes were the least prevalent ECE role in Region 5, comprising about 4.3% of the workforce in 2022, but earned the highest median wage at \$13.98. This ranks in the 12th percentile of all occupations in the region, meaning 88% of occupations earn a higher median wage. Other occupations with median wages that fell in the 12th percentile include Telemarketers, Food Servers, and Security Guards – roles that generally only require a high school diploma or have no education requirements at all.

# \$13.98

Substitutes earn the highest wage of ECE occupations in the region, at \$13.98 per hour in 2022



# 88%

of all occupations in the region earn a higher median wage, placing Substitutes in the 12th percentile

# 70%

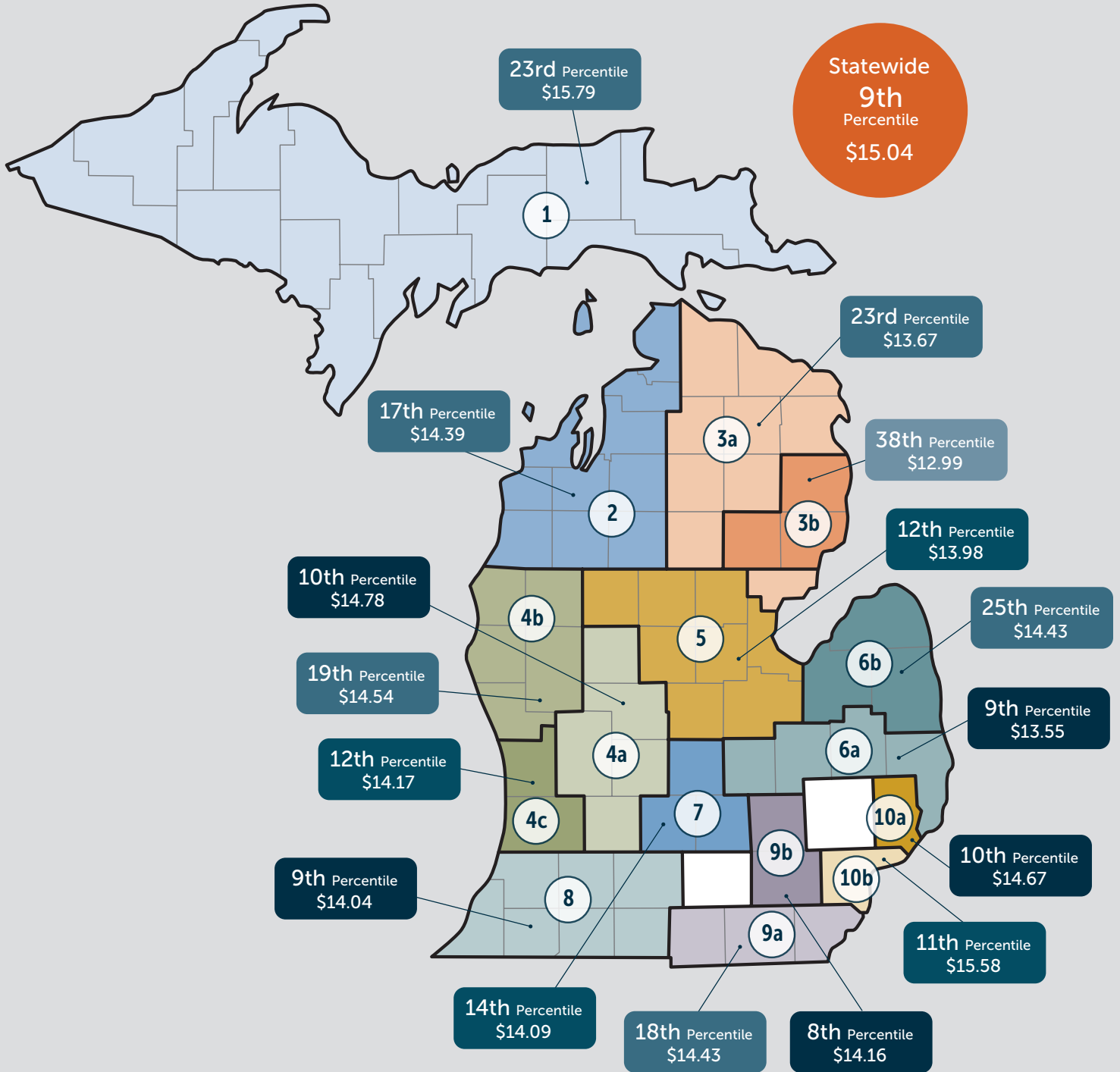
of Substitutes in a dual-income household must rely on some form of public assistance

### Overview of Employment and Wages for Substitutes

Employment (2022)	Employment Trend		Current Median Earnings	Proposed Base Wage	
	Past Growth (2001-2022)	Projected Growth (2022-2032)		Preschool	Infant-Toddler
133	 (-89%)	 (24.2%)	\$13.98 Hourly, 2022	\$18.30	\$20.13

The median wage of Substitutes is nearly half of the living wage of \$26.75 required to sustain the average family size in Region 5 (one adult, one preschooler, one school-aged child) in 2022. As such, **approximately 70% of Substitutes in the region earn below the self-sufficiency standard for a dual-income household, while 94% are not capable of supporting the average-sized family on their income alone.**

Percentile Ranking of Substitutes Median Wage Compared to All 797 Occupations in Region, 2022



Percentile Ranking, Low to High



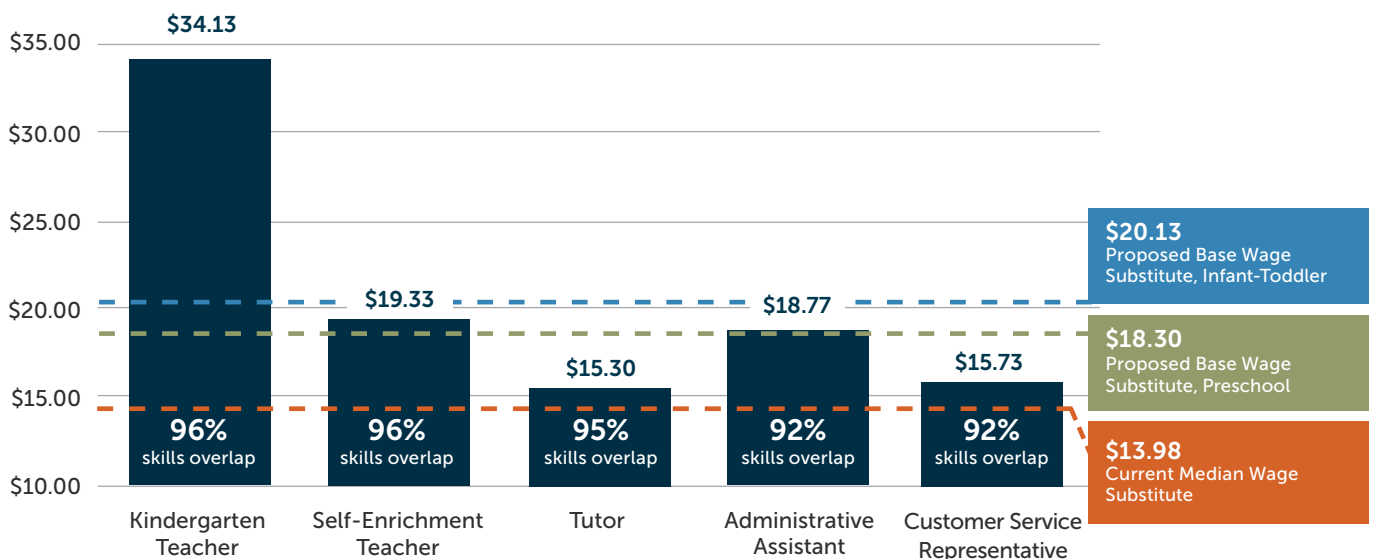
# Substitute Wages Fall Significantly Below Comparable Roles

In terms of competencies and work activities, Substitutes fall squarely between Lead Teachers and Assistant Teachers. Substitutes generally don't create lesson plans or evaluate student performance, unless they're in long-term assignments, but they are responsible for taking leadership over the classroom in a Lead Teacher's absence. As such, Kindergarten Teachers are the most similar alternative occupation to Substitutes, requiring 96% of the same skills and similar educational qualifications as Substitutes in school-based settings. Yet, the current median hourly wage of Substitutes falls \$20.15 below the median wage of Kindergarten Teachers.



Self-Enrichment Teachers provide instruction to students in subjects that aren't academic or vocational, but tend to be more recreational – including art, dance, yoga, and various sports. These roles require 96% of the same skills as Substitutes and earn \$5.35 more per hour at the median. One notable difference, aside from the age range of the students receiving instruction, is that Self-Enrichment Teachers don't require education beyond high school – making any Substitute qualified to transition into this role.

**Median Wage of Most Similar Roles and Share of Overlapping Skills Substitute, Region 5, 2022**



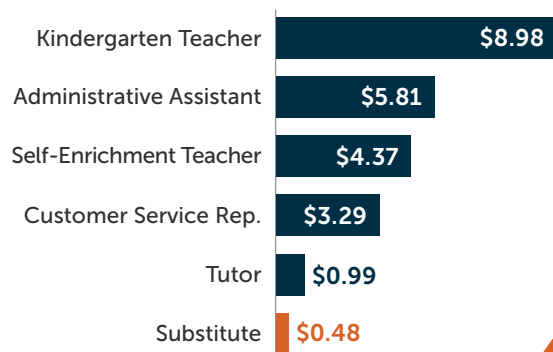
Substitutes earned **\$6.25 less** per hour in 2022 than they did in 2005 when accounting for inflation.

Aside from Kindergarten Teachers, none of the top occupations that are most comparable to Substitutes require any education beyond high school, and all are associated with higher earning potential.

The current wage gap between Substitutes and alternative roles ranges from as little as \$1.32 for Tutors, to as high as \$20.15 for Kindergarten Teachers. Over the course of a year, that could add up to over \$2,080 or \$41,912 more in gross earnings for a Substitute.

The median wage of Substitutes has grown at a much slower rate than other ECE roles since 2005. What's more, the 4% increase has failed to keep pace with inflation. As a result, the real change in wages for Substitutes stands at -46%. This means that Substitutes in 2022 really earned \$6.25 per hour less than in 2005.

### Median Wage Growth, Region 5 2005-2022





# Proposed Wage Scaling of Substitutes in Region 5

Wages shown on the opposite page reflect the entry-level, base hourly wage for a Substitute of preschool-aged children with the given educational qualification in Region 5. The base wage should increase by 2.5% for every year of experience. Thus, a Substitute of preschool-aged children with an associate degree and six years of experience should earn a wage of \$23.34. Substitutes in long-term assignments should receive a 10% increase to the wage associated with their education and experience, because the responsibilities more closely align to a Lead Teacher (lesson planning, etc.).

## ECE Teaching Occupations

The ECE framework is founded on the work of the national Power to the Profession Task Force, which in 2019 adopted a unifying framework of ECE I, II, and III, reflecting standards and competencies for the early childhood education profession:

### ECE I – Certificate/Apprenticeship

- F1: High School Diploma/GED
- F2: High School Diploma/GED + 60 hrs of training
- F3: High School Diploma/GED + 90 hrs of training + 6 semesters
- P1: CDA + 12 semesters
- P1.5: CDA + Apprenticeship Certificate

### ECE 2 – Associate Degree/Apprenticeship

- P2: Associate degree in ECE/related field
- P2.5: Associate degree + Apprenticeship Certificate

### ECE 3 – Bachelor’s Degree and Above

- P3: Bachelor’s degree in ECE or related field + 30 credit hours in ECE
- P4: Master’s degree in ECE or related field
- P5: Ph.D. or Ed.D. in ECE or related field

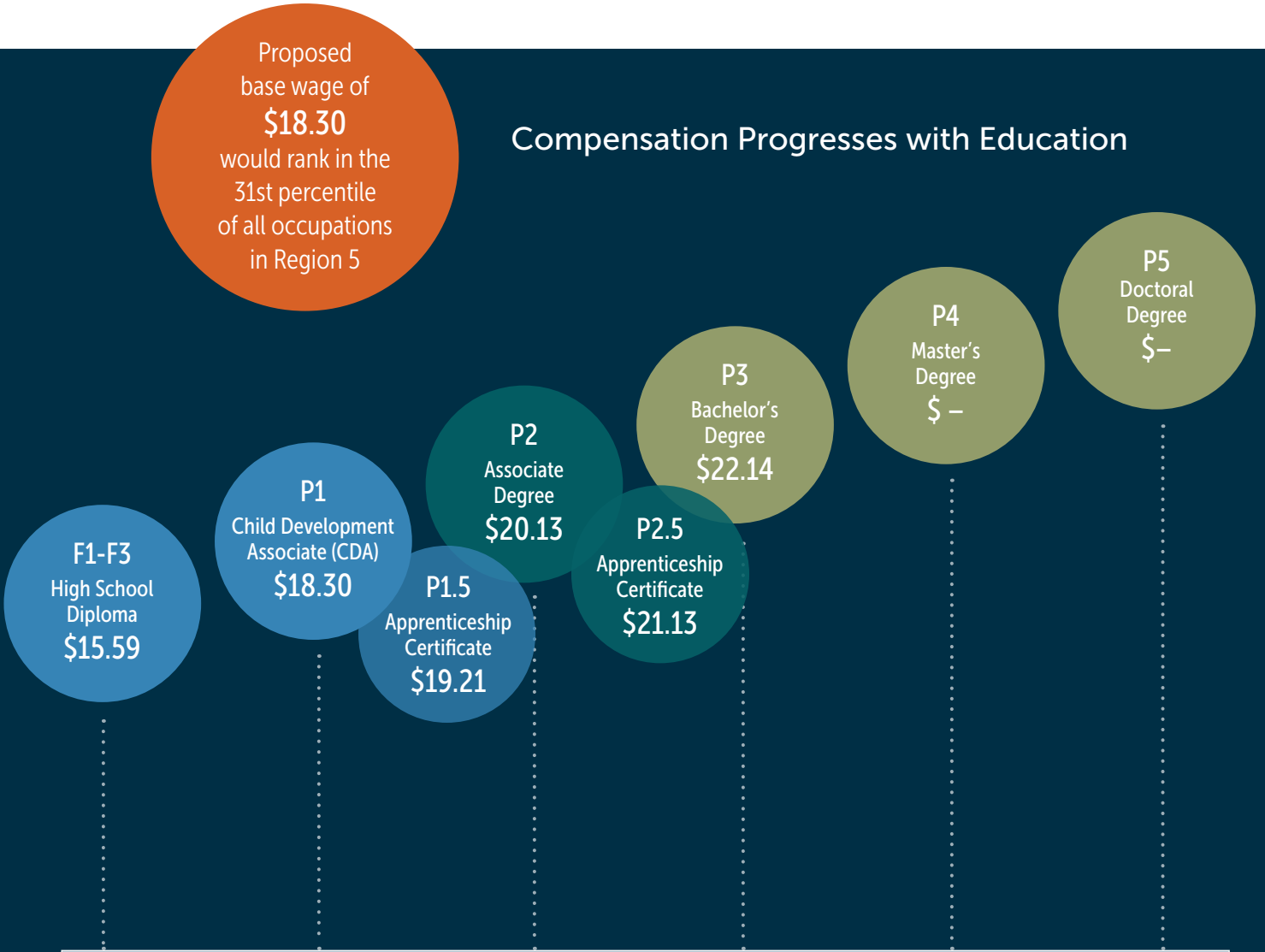


*F1-P5 designations come from MiRegistry, Michigan’s professional development registry for the early childhood and school age workforce.*

## Substitute Minimum Qualifications Across Settings (usually the same as Lead Teacher)

School-based including Head Start & GSRP	Child Care Centers	Family Care Centers
Bachelor’s Degree with at least 18 hours in Early Childhood Education; sometimes requires valid Michigan teaching certificate	High school diploma and Child Development Associate (CDA) credential	High School Diploma + one college course in Early Childhood Education or 20 hours of training

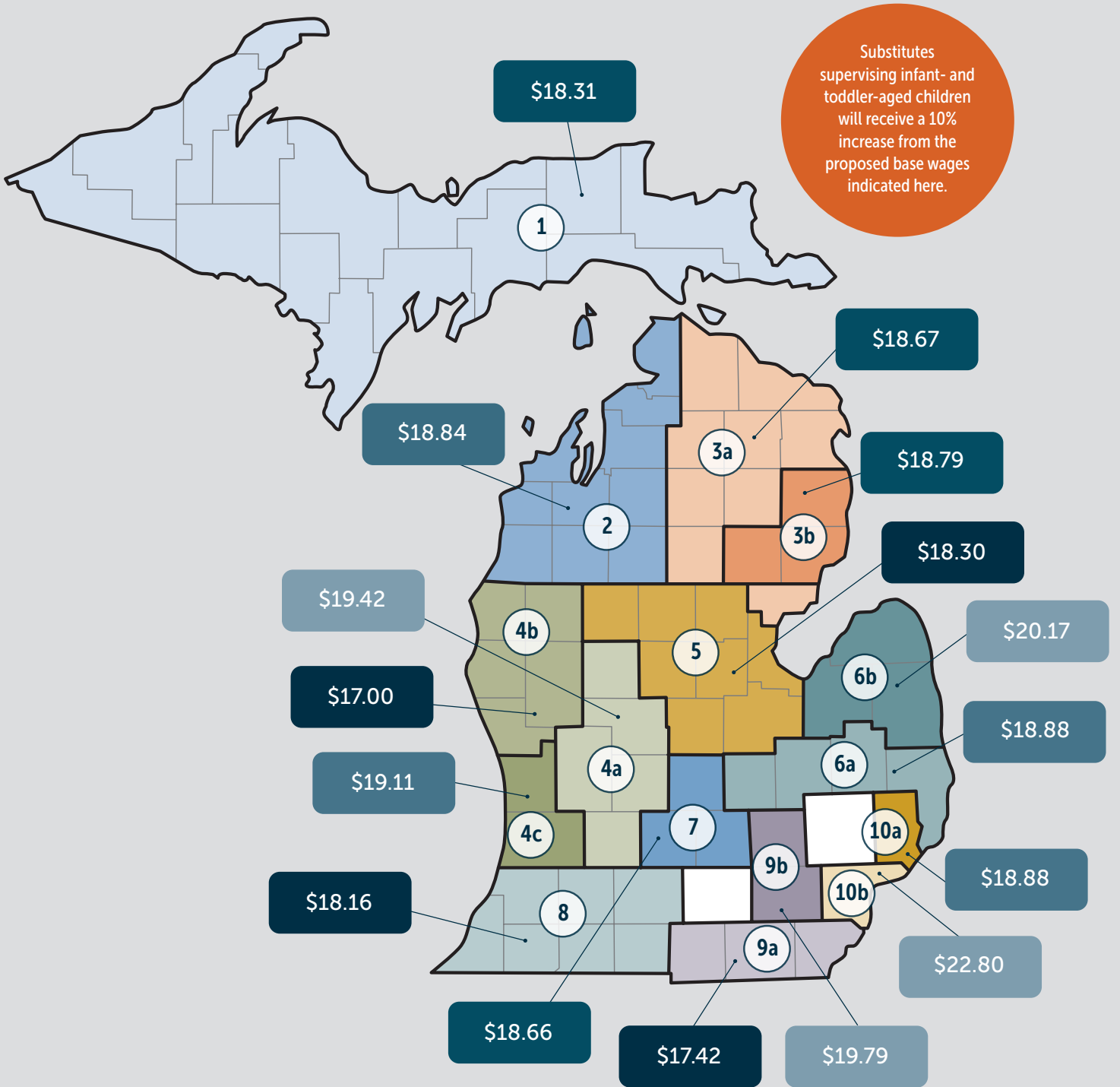
## Compensation Progresses with Education



ECE professionals supervising infant- and toddler-aged children will receive a 10% increase from the base wage associated with that role supervising preschool-aged children. Thus, a Substitute of infants and toddlers with a bachelor's degree should earn a base wage of \$24.35.

## Proposed Base Wages for Substitutes, per Region, Preschool

(Base wages reflect the entry-level salary for a Substitute with a child development associate (CDA) credential.)



Proposed Wages, Low to High

\$17.00



\$22.80



# Conclusion

In recent years, governments and communities have increasingly embraced early care and education programs as a key solution for early learning for children and families, and a driver for many lifelong benefits. Despite this recognition, systemic early childhood workforce challenges that worsened for decades became particularly acute during the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, hundreds of Michigan early care and education classrooms are closed or operating at diminished capacity due to workforce issues — costing the state an estimated \$2.88 billion in economic activity per year.



Unlike other sectors, a market-driven approach has proved insufficient to address Michigan's child care crisis. Child care has a regulatory environment that enforces strict ratios between early educators and children. This means providers are unable to increase capacity to offset increased costs of labor. With parents as the primary payor, increasing educator wages would put even greater pressure on household incomes for Michigan families. Since no high-quality alternatives exist, as they do in other markets, parents would either be forced to pay a greater share of their income, find inferior or possibly unsafe substitutes, or leave the workforce and stay home to act as their own caregivers.

The comparatively low compensation for early childhood educators, as documented in our analysis, is a significant factor contributing to these child care shortages. Because Michigan's early care and education workforce is comprised almost entirely of women, many of whom are women of color, these low wages also perpetuate existing racial and gender-based wealth disparities.

Michigan's child care system requires additional funding to place early educator compensation on par with comparable roles in the public K-12 system. This is a crucial first step for Michigan to move toward a living wage model that more closely reflects the education and responsibilities expected of this important profession. It should be noted, however, that increased investment should not come on the backs of parents, as expenses are already prohibitive, in some cases rivaling the cost of college. Additional state and federal investments will be required to create a sustainable funding mechanism that promotes a system of accessible, high-quality ECE that places equity at the center.

These benefits extend beyond the ECE workforce, starting with children who will have greater access to the high-quality early education critical to their development. Reversing Michigan's loss of child care openings will remove one of the biggest barriers to employment, allowing parents to rejoin the workforce. This will simultaneously increase tax revenues and reduce the cost of public assistance programs. Increasing early childhood educator pay is an investment that will pay multiple dividends across generations.



#### **About Early Childhood Investment Corporation**

Created in 2005 to be a statewide leader in early childhood, ECIC collaborates to increase public and private investment in the earliest years, to elevate issues affecting young children and their families, and continuously improve Michigan's comprehensive early childhood system, ensuring every child has the opportunity to succeed in school and in life. For nearly two decades, ECIC has effectively invested over \$250 million in communities across Michigan,

#### **About TalentFirst**

TalentFirst is a 501c3, CEO alliance providing leadership on today's complex talent challenges. It relies on data and expertise to illuminate gaps, evaluate strategies, and advocate for solutions to attract, retain, and develop the talent West Michigan employers need and to ensure all individuals and the region can thrive. TalentFirst is headquartered in West Michigan and works in partnership with organizations and communities across the state. TalentFirst has a track record of developing reputable research reports, including wage studies and wage scales, for the early childhood sector and other industries.









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