

Press Release

For Immediate Release

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Gov. Holcomb unveils 2023 Next Level Agenda

INDIANAPOLIS – Governor Eric J. Holcomb today announced as part of his 2023 Next Level Agenda he will pursue transformational changes to the way public health is delivered in Indiana, historic investments in K-12 education – including fully funding the cost of textbooks for Indiana students and new literacy initiatives, and –even stronger economic development tools to capture key economic development projects, and investing another \$500 million in the successful READI program

“By making lasting investments in our health, education and workforce we are building a stronger tomorrow for all Hoosiers,” Gov. Holcomb said. “First and foremost, we will protect our fiscal strength of Indiana by adopting our 10th straight honestly balanced budget which allows us to strategically prioritize public health, education, workforce, as well as economic and community development to elevate Indiana to the Next Level and provide citizens and their families the tools they need to not just survive but thrive for generations to come.”

Governor Holcomb’s 2023 Next Level Agenda details, both legislative and administrative priorities, can be found in five key categories.

Health and Wellbeing

The governor is committed to fundamentally improving Hoosier health outcomes by providing the necessary resources and service delivery. He will pursue implementation of the Governor’s Public Health Commission recommendations, including a budget request for \$120 million for state fiscal year 2024 and \$227 million in 2025, with most of the dollars available to county officials. The increased funding will be used to:

- Provide sustainable core public health service investments in all 92 counties
- Standardize governance, infrastructure and services to all 92 counties.
- Establish a State Health Workforce Council to help develop a framework for state health employees
- Maintain a state health office of data and analytics to integrate public health data for quality improvement and disease prevention
- Invest in emergency preparedness through EMS training and readiness and maintain a state strategic stockpile of supplies
- Promote access to child and adolescent health screenings

Better access to mental health services continues to be a priority in the 2023 Next Level Agenda. The governor has initiated a three-pillar crisis prevention and response system to provide Hoosiers with someone to contact, someone to respond and a safe place for help. In addition to improving and expanding the 988 Crisis and Suicide Lifeline services the state is:

- Piloting four mobile crisis teams in 15 counties to ensure there is someone to respond. The number of crisis teams will continue to grow in 2023 and beyond
- Developing crisis stabilization units by awarding grants for pilot programs to ensure Hoosiers have a safe place to go to receive help
- Continuing the transition to a Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic system to increase the availability of quality mental health services and continuing to reduce wait times in the state psychiatric hospital network
- Implementing the Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide among veterans and service members by investing \$4.25 million over the next two years to promote veteran wellness, reduce risk, increase protection and improve effective treatment and recovery

Gov. Holcomb will continue to provide necessary resources to combat the drug epidemic. In 2023, the governor will launch a new Treatment Finder Program to connect Hoosiers battling addiction with the appropriate treatment. The state, along with local partners, will begin to invest the more than \$500 million the state will receive in the coming years from the national opioid settlement to create more community substance use programs to help those suffering from addiction.

Education and Workforce

Since 2017 Gov. Holcomb has made historic investments in education and his 2023 agenda elevates education and workforce, again, to the Next Level.

K-12

Gov. Holcomb intends to make more historic investment in K-12 education. The governor is proposing the following:

- Increase tuition support by 6% in FY2024 and 2% in FY2025 equaling \$1.157 billion. Gov. Holcomb will push for additional dollars to go to the classroom to continue the effort to increase average teacher salaries to at least \$60,000 a year. The average teacher salary now is \$56,600
- Collaborate with legislators to establish a \$20 million incentive program that rewards schools and teachers that improve students' passing rate for IREAD3. The Indiana Department of Education's goal is that 95 percent of students in third grade demonstrate reading proficiency skills by 2027
- Secure \$10 million in state funding to obtain another \$10 million match from the Lilly Endowment to continue the state's investment in literacy through the Science of Reading
- **Prohibit textbook and curricular material fees for Indiana K-12 families.** Indiana is one of seven states that allows families to be charged for textbooks
- Fully fund the cost of textbooks and other curriculum materials for more than 1 million students at all traditional public and charter schools and eligible students in non-public schools. Cost is approximately \$160 million per year.
- Ask the General Assembly to approve legislation that directs DOE to conduct a full review of other fees that public schools charge families
- Work to ensure high-quality STEM curriculum is in every Indiana classroom

- Launch Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library statewide. The program provides every child from birth to 5-years-old with one book each month. The state’s share of the program is estimated to be \$4.1 million in the first two years

Higher Education

The governor recommends investing in higher education by committing to a 6% increase in year one and a 2% increase in year two, totaling \$184 million of the biennial budget. His support comes with the charge that a portion of the new funding will be based on performance goals for retaining graduating students in Indiana. Gov. Holcomb supports the Commissioner for Higher Education in its goal of auto-enrolling eligible students in the 21st Century Scholarship Program.

The governor will also ask for a one-time \$10 million budget commitment to Martin University to support the only Predominately Black Institution in Indiana and boost the support of graduation by more first-generation college and low-income minority students.

Early Learning

The governor will also expand eligibility for Child Care and Development Fund vouchers and work with legislators to expand On My Way Pre K eligibility by raising the income eligibility limits for the programs from 127% to 138% of the federal poverty limit. This change will expand program access to about 5,000 more lower income working families. Federal funds will be used through September 2024, with an estimated state impact of \$15 million annually after that.

The Family and Social Services Administration will use \$25 million in federal funds to develop an innovative grant program to encourage employer-sponsored childcare to provide more onsite options for working caregivers.

Workforce

Gov. Holcomb is committed to providing Hoosiers with more opportunities to obtain the skills they need to prepare for the jobs of tomorrow. The agenda proposes more investment in adult education to reduce the number of working age adults without a high school diploma or workforce training. He will seek to do the following:

- Invest in Department of Workforce Development (DWD) adult education training by requesting an additional \$12 million over two years for education programs. This will help eliminate a waiting list of 8,000 people who are seeking more training opportunities
- Expand the evidence-based model of Excel Center programs in several cities by increasing funding by \$3 million in 2024 and \$11 million in 2025
- Increase funding from \$1 million to \$1.5 million annually for the Graduation Alliance, an online education program for adults to achieve a diploma or credential
- Support the development of a DWD Unemployment Insurance pilot program that incentivizes recipients to complete their diploma or equivalency. Estimated cost is \$4.4 million annually

- Support the Workforce Ready Grant by increasing the investment to \$6 million a year at DWD, \$6 million a year at the Indiana Commission for Higher Education and maintaining the Employer Training Grant investment at \$17 million annually
- Facilitate relocating veterans to Indiana through INVETS by doubling funding to \$2 million annually

Economic Development

To build upon the record-breaking year of capturing \$22.2 billion in committed capital investment, the agenda focuses on diversifying the Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC) toolkit to remain competitive for future growth. Gov. Holcomb commits to do the following:

- Formalize a \$300 million per year deal closing fund and an additional \$300 million per year tax credit cap to give the state the flexibility and competitive edge to attract new businesses and jobs
- Establish an ongoing revolving fund of \$150 million for site acquisition efforts
- Expand the Manufacturing Readiness Grant Program by doubling the funding to \$40 million over two years to support the growth of existing businesses
- Increase Indiana Destination Development Corporation's funding by \$20 million to attract visitors and retain students as they transition to the workforce

Community Development

Connections

The 2023 Next Level Agenda seeks to better connect Hoosiers to their neighbors, communities and beyond. Gov. Holcomb will request an additional \$500 million to fund another round of the Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative (READI). READI has become a nationally recognized innovative program that brings communities together to build for their future.

Gov. Holcomb remains committed to expanding the state's trails system and adding to our land conservation program. The governor is requesting an additional \$50 million for Next Level Trails to continue the historic pursuit of becoming the most trail friendly state in the country, and he will request \$25 million for additional land conservation efforts.

The state will move forward with a fourth round of Next Level Connections to address broadband service gaps. \$70 million in state and federal funds remain. Indiana also is developing a plan in anticipation of the release of funding from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act to continue to bring quality and affordable service to all corners of the state.

The state will continue its partnership with the state's food bank network by increasing funding from \$1 million to \$2 million each year.

Public Safety

Supporting public safety to maintain safe communities and schools will continue to be a priority in 2023. The governor will work with legislators to improve school safety by increasing the Secured School Safety Grant Fund to \$25 million, expanding the ways schools can use the grants, and aligning policies across all public schools. Indiana has invested nearly \$133 million in grants to improve school safety in the past nine years.

To support Indiana State Police and other agency law enforcement officials Gov. Holcomb will propose raising the starting salary of state police troopers to \$70,000. The current starting salary of \$53,690 is significantly below other law enforcement agencies in the state according to a study completed by the Indiana State Police Alliance.

The governor will also propose a \$24.2 million investment in a regional firefighter training infrastructure to provide a consistent and standardized firefighting training model across the state. The governor is directing the Department of Homeland Security to enhance existing training sites and create new ones to help cover the training gaps that exist in some areas of Indiana. In addition, the state will invest \$10 million over the next five years to purchase needed equipment and gear for volunteer firefighting organizations.

Good Government

The 2023 agenda will include \$160 million budget request to fund the state employee compensation pay study which was implemented in late 2022 to attract and retain state employees who provide critical services to Hoosiers in all 92 counties.

Additionally, the governor will request funding in the current fiscal year to follow through on the commitment to complete the following four capital projects: new Westville Correctional Facility; new state archives building; co-location of the state's blind and deaf schools, and a new state park inn at Potato Creek State Park.

To watch Gov. Holcomb's agenda announcement and learn more about Gov. Holcomb's 2023 Next Level Agenda, visit <https://www.in.gov/gov/next-level-agenda/>.