*The webinar was hosted by Dr. Jamie Wu, Holli Schlukebir, and Marissa Castellana on May 20, 2025.*

Wu: All right. I will start. Hi everyone, my name is Jamie Wu. I'm a Research Assistant Professor at MSU. I'm also doing evaluation for the Strong Beginnings, childcare mapping project, GSRP and 21st century. Today, we're really happy that you can join us, because this is one of our maps series that we have worked with MiLEAP to show you... to help monitor the health of Michigan's childcare sector. In today's map, we focus on the changes that have been happening in the last few years. We started with the initiative with Caring for MI Future, which we use the data as the baseline and connect our database with the LARA system to sort of get the most updated data possible looking at Michigan's childcare center and providers' types and the differences across the state. And today, the focus is on the changes over the last few years, and I'm happy to introduce my colleague here. Holli Schlukebir and Marissa Castellana. I still have a hard time pronounce your name. And they are... Holli in particular has been working on these maps and designing how it can be more user- friendly, and we would like to use today's opportunity to share with you our recent work, as well as to get feedback from you. So, maybe I will just turn the floor to Holli. Are you ready?

Schlukebir:Yeah, that sounds great. Let me share my screen. And the first thing that I'm going to show you, hopefully you can all see our website right now, but I'm going to show you just because I forgot in the last webinar. If you go to "People", you will find -- there's Jamie, there's Marissa, and I'm down here. Please feel free to email us with recommendations, ideas, just any feedback you have regarding the maps.

And either Marissa or Jamie will post the map link into the chat just so you can see what we're talking about. But yes, we have been focusing on updating this map, which we have titled our "Comparing Annual Licensed Provider Counts" map because we are taking data snapshots from September 2022, September 2023, and September 2024 and comparing them to today's licensing data to see how things have changed year to year. Um, which is quite exciting. And, we have categorized providers into kind of three buckets. The first one, which is the most exciting, are providers that are newly licensed compared to that September 2022 start date or those that have increased their licensed capacity. Then, we have providers that have continued operating since 2022 to today with no change in capacity. And then we have providers that are no longer licensed or have actually decreased their licensed capacity. And right now, we are looking at the whole state of Michigan. So as a whole, you can see the most predominant group is "no change in slots or capacity", followed by "new or increased slots in capacity", which is pretty awesome.

Let's see. There's so much information on this map, so I'm just going to try and go through it piece by piece. One really important caveat to consider when looking at this map is that this is all based on annual licensing data. So we kind of... it's very... we can't capture the day-to-day changes in capacity. So, we are assuming that September 2022, September 2023, September 2024 are representative of those years. So, this is our best estimation on how capacity has changed.

We also have, up at the top, the estimated number of providers by license type and year. As you can see, it's been fairly steady from 2022 to today, a slight upcrease and then kind of a decrease, but still more than 2022. And then estimated slots by license type and year. And, I will go further into the estimated licensed slots in a little bit just to kind of go over our methodology for you later on.

In the meantime, we also look at where providers are located. So, we kind of compare providers to their zip code characteristics to kind of see where they are operating, what their community is like, and how those opportunities and resources impact capacity changes. So, as you can see, we have four... four charts. On the right side, the first one looks at how has capacity changes varied by license type? So, you can see kind of the greatest... There have been more openings of group homes for... relative to that license type versus family homes, which are very close.

If we look at Boston University's Child Opportunity Index, which is a classification looking at census data of 44 indicators of community characteristics like income levels, the amount of schools in the area, health and socioeconomic resources, stuff like that to kind of look at all... all zip codes in the state of Michigan and classify them as "very low" to "very high". So "very high" meaning abundant resources, great access to educational and socioeconomic and environmental resources, where "very low" is the opposite. Which you can see, there has been more new or increased providers, or providers that are new or have increased slots in "very low," "low," and "moderate" communities, which is phenomenal.

In a similar kind of analysis, the Child Opportunity Index has another subdomain called Employment Opportunity Level, which we added to show how employment opportunity relates to providers' changing capacity. And that is based on feedback that we heard in another webinar of... childcare is very linked to employment, whether it be parents' demands or providers' capacity or the supply is less in an area. So we added that in. Again, it ranges from "very low" to "very high", meaning "very high", there's a lot of stable, well-paying, high-skilled jobs in their zip code.

And then, the final variable that we added to look at community characteristics in relation to providers is geographic type. City, rural or town, and suburb.

Okay. So to get into the nitty gritty of all of these variables and characteristics and how we classified providers, I am going to take you over to our technical report, which we'll just look at briefly. Feel free to peruse at your... at your own interest, but this talks about how... it defines the license types. It talks about how we determine licensed childcare slots, which is we assume that slots are proportionally distributed across the age range that a provider is licensed to serve. We... we assume capacity is evenly allocated, which is current standard practice, because it is difficult to get the day-to-day reality. So we fall back on best practices, which actually comes from the Center for American Progress. They kind of pioneered this type of analysis. The technical report dives in a little bit more about the Child Opportunity Index and Economic Opportunity Level. And then also, it has links if you are interested and want to go explore more. You can see... there we go. You can kind of figure out more about these resources, what they mean. And then geographic type. Again, it talks about where we got this information from, the link to go out and find more. And then, we also... the map breaks down providers by their economic development organizations. So, that is based on what region and county providers are located in. And then, just to give you a fair representation of what the map's assumptions are, we also assume that all families with children counted in the American Community Survey are seeking licensed childcare and only do so within their zip code. So, we overstate demand, but that is kind of accompanied by another assumption that we assume all licensed providers are operating at full capacity and that their slots are evenly distributed. So, this may be an overestimation of supply. And, we don't have actual information on, say, if a provider operates on the weekends or the day or weekends or weekdays only, stuff like that. So again, we we assume they operate year round. Yeah. The map only looks at licensed providers, because that's the data that we have. Unfortunately, we don't have information on license-exempt, unlicensed, or informal providers, even though they are very important participants in the childcare ecosystem. And, I think I've covered most of this, but if you are interested, please, please, please download this, review all of the limitations, explanations, assumptions, citations. It's all the information you could ever want.

Okay. I think I've gone over all the technical aspects. So, I'll go into more of the fun graphics of the map. So, you can filter the map based on counties you're interested in. I always default to the county that I grew up in, so Oceana. Something you'll remember if you attended the last webinar, which was on licensed childcare deserts. If you didn't, it is available on our website-- I forgot the word website -- to review. But, so, you can look at this analysis specific to a county, multiple counties. So, let's go to a neighboring one. Let's see what Muskegon looks like in relation to Oceana. And again, it... the analysis kind of updates to reflect the geographic area you're looking at. If you are... If you think like, "you know what? That's great that it's showing those counties. I'm really interested in specific zip codes." You can toggle on and off zip code and county boundaries. So, this introduces zip code boundaries, and you can say, "Great. I want to look at these three specific zip codes. Show me those." And the map will update to show you those specific zip codes and the providers in those areas. Or, for example, for this code right here, there are no providers in that area. And again, the analysis updates.

Say you are interested in a more regional view, we also have that. Let me turn off the zip code boundaries. You can look at different economic development organizations, and I will click on the Upper Peninsula. Great. And another cool feature of the map that you can toggle on and off, if you wish, is to show all non-local roads, just because it is kind of hard to get a sense of where providers are without knowing like their exact location to familiar boundaries and markers and stuff like that, so you can look at roads in relations to providers. So, say Bright Beginnings. Oh, yeah, I know that provider. They are on US 41. Again, you can turn that off. If you have the area that you are interested in filtered to, you can hide the map... hide the map filters, which increases the map size.

Let's see. Oh, we know licensed child care varies on which age groups you're looking at. So, the default is to look at licensed capacity for children 0 to 13, but say you're interested in infants and toddlers. Then, it filters to providers that serve infants and toddlers, which is 0 to 2, and then also what we assume the licensed capacity is. Again, let's go to preschoolers. Very similar. School age. Yeah. So, it is a map that you can kind of play with and figure out what you're... what analysis you're actually interested in.

And when you find a snapshot that you want to keep or you've figured out what exactly... what geographic area you're interested in, you can download this whole map as a PDF. And, I'm going to pause for a second, take a sip of water, and flip over to see if there are any questions that I can help answer. I know I'm throwing a lot of information at you.

Oh, I've been doing this throughout the the presentation, but if you hover over different parts of the dashboard, you'll find more information, like if you hover over a specific provider... If you hover over, for example, you want to know more about closed or decreased providers that are closed or have a decrease in slots, you can actually see the counts if you hover over the bar. Same with if you want to know the number of providers that closed or have decrease in slots that are licensed as centers. So, lots more information there for those that are interested. Okay. I'm going to take a sip of water. Okay. Lots in the chat. Lots of questions.

Wu: Hey, Holli. Can you screen share the image that is not myself on the screen?

Schlukebir:Oh, my gosh, I did it last time too. There you go. I think I shut it off.

Wu:Yeah. You have dual monitor. I see that's why. Last time when we met, can you go back and screen share the map? I want to add that last time when we met, you guys asked questions about unemployment rate, how that affects the childcare sector. We went into the... look for unemployment rates, and then to help, like, better interpret what that data is like, you know, unemployment rate of 10%, is it low or is it high? Right, so we looked into those kind of data and that there is an Employment Opportunity Level, which talks about unemployment rates along with other factors, like the sectors, the jobs available, stuff like that. And then, we inserted that as one of the analysis here for your... for your review. And what we are seeing here is basically it's really mimicking with the Child Opportunity Level that the providers' allo[cations], like distributions, are almost identical. So, we... what we're seeing is when in an area where there is a lower opportunity, higher unemployment rates, the center based... the most of the programs were stayed stayed the same with the yellow bar. And... and then the... there's there's also a slight increase with the... with the slots in areas that needed the most. And most of the... the newer opening providers are in the "very low" and "low" opportunities. And, although the closure is also higher, but it's about the same with the other regions.

Schlukebir:Yes. And to jump into what Jamie is talking about, these bars show the breakdown of providers by these characteristics. So, for example, this bar in particular breaks down providers that are in an area classified as having a very low or low employment opportunity level. So that may be different when you look at, for example, the whole distribution of providers in a different category. I want to put that caveat in that this reflects the specific provider capacity change type and the employment opportunity levels. So that's why if you're interested in specific counts, you can hover over the bar to get more information.

Wu:Holli, I see a question regarding whether we can download county level estimates of any metric. Can you show us how to do it?

Schlukebir:Yes. So, let me filter. Let's go to… let's go to Ingham County just because we're located in Lansing. Okay. I'm going to hide the filters and you can download. I want to scale it to one page high and it will download. It takes a second or two for it to download, but it'll download as a PDF. Although I think I might have my download settings off. But yes, you can you can download it. Yeah. So it is possible. I think the specific browser I have opened, I have my security settings on. So let me flip over to another one. Oh, there we go. No, it just takes a minute. I downloaded three of them at once. There we go. Yeah.

Wu: Sorry.

Schlukebir**:** No, you're good.

**Wu:** I just saw Jordan's question regarding whether we can have the employment opportunity or child opportunity as the background on a map so they can choose the regions that is low on certain things instead of just analytics.

Schlukebir**:** Yeah, so that is something we can definitely do. It is… it becomes an issue when we look at ADA accessibility, but it is something that we can definitely troubleshoot on our end and produce for you. Yeah, so definitely very possible, very, very likely. And we'll make that change, and when we send out the webinar recording link, we'll have the map updated, so that you can actually see those characteristics in relation to providers.

Wu:Yes. Thank you, Holli. Can you go back to move your mouse a little bit higher so we can see what are the current filter options if you show the filters. So, the current filters are county zip code, and then the economic development zones, the regions, and then the right-hand side are options whether you show county boundary, whether you show zip code boundary, and the local roads, the major roads. And so, if we were to add an opportunity index on there, it would be like, among one of the “select counties,” “select the code” and then do another one like “select the opportunity level.”

Castellana**:** Nicole and Jordan have a follow up question to the first, and it's is it possible to download this information into a CSV format as opposed to a PDF?

Schlukebir:It is not, just because of the limitations of our data sharing agreement that we can't download… we can't have that bulk information downloaded. Unfortunately, yeah. Sorry about that, though. Yeah. The options are image or PDF, and if you download it as a PowerPoint, it downloads as an image within a PowerPoint. So I'm sorry, we can't do that. Are there any other questions?

Wu:Thank you. Marissa, do you want to help facilitate a little discussions?

Castellana:That sounds great. I have a list of questions for you all just to help with some reflection and to think about the application of this map on your current work and how it can apply to your specific setting. My first question for you is, how can this map apply to your work? Or what is one insight or idea that you can take back to your team? Feel free to reflect on that question and share in the chat or out loud. Yes, I'll put the question in the chat.

And, Nicole, I see your question as well. Does the licensed provider data take into consideration active or inactive status? And I'll let Holli or Jamie answer that question.

Schlukebir:Yeah, it does not. It assumes that all providers whose licenses are… licenses are active or currently that a provider is currently licensed within the system that they're operating.

Castellana:So, I just put the question in the chat. Debbie, thank you for your response. It's something very simple, but I love that the maps can be downloaded into a PowerPoint. That's a great response. And yes, it is very nice that you can download the specific information that you would like from these maps.

Great. I will ask my next question, but feel free to continue to reflect on that first question. And I'll also post this one in the chat. But the question is, what might these changes in provider counts mean for families’ access to childcare in your community? Nicole, great point that you've been using this data with your regional coalition partners to allow them to contextualize information. Really great point that this map allows you to see where the gaps are, which is very crucial when we're thinking about access to childcare. The Child Opportunity Index and the economic sector as well and considering the resources that are available, great points. They're all great reflections and applications of this work.

Great. I will post my next question as well before I read out loud. Yes. I see a response as well about how seeing trends can help you identify early childhood education gaps. Definitely. That response gets into my next question regarding equity. Do you see any equity concerns regarding the distribution of provider changes in your community or across the state?

Schlukebir:Can you read some of the responses for people who watched the webinar later and might not have access to the map or the chat?

Castellana:Yes, I can. Thanks for the reminder, Holli. So, Preti’s response from before about viewing the trends of Michigan providers can provide context for local early childhood education gaps and specific to Detroit, which is where they're at, is an excellent point. Identifying those gaps is crucial for understanding the distribution of these childcare providers. Nicole, great point. She said, “It has really highlighted some of the challenges in our rural communities. Many expressed a lack of capacity to explore these gaps and even develop proposals to address them.” That is an excellent point and reminds me of our last webinar about childcare deserts, which we do have a map with that information as well as a recording of that webinar on our website. So, if you missed that last one and are interested about the challenges faced in rural communities, and even in urban communities within childcare deserts, that could be a great resource for you. Great follow up, Nicole. “We have had insightful conversations around relative care providers as equity issues.” Yes, there is some research saying that when childcare providers are far from families’ residential home addresses or are located in these childcare deserts or in rural communities, where childcare providers are far, informal relative care tends to be an option, and an option chosen over more formal care options.

Wu**:** I think one of the questions about whether we see some trends that is related to equity issues, we are seeing that center based organizations are slightly on the increased side more than the family group… group homes. The number of family and group home, the smaller organizations, the number has been decreasing a little bit, even though the slots have been considered stable, meaning that maybe the increase of the slides have been happening with family and group home in particular, even though the fewer providers… individual providers that… we see a little downtrend with the family homes and group homes. Center however, has a more stable presence in the state. And the numbers with the licensed center based childcare centers have been increasing more.

Castellana:Thank you, Jamie. Nicole, you brought up another great point that relative care not included in licensed childcare numbers, but many families are using this option. It would be helpful to view where these providers are. It's a great point, but difficult to achieve since they're not licensed.

Great. I will ask another question. Then of course, if you have any other questions about this map, while we're going through this Q&A facilitation, definitely don't hesitate to ask. Jordan, you mentioned it would be helpful to be able to see if the increase in center spots is related to GSRP expansion. Great point. Yes. Nicole followed up. Yes, definitely. “The closest we've gotten is being able to map relative care providers receiving subsidy.” Great point. My next question is what supports do providers need to remain open or expand their services? Jordan says, “Funding for wages.” Definitely. “Grants.” “Facilities.” Yes. Those are all great points. We know that funding is crucial to be supporting the wages for childcare workers, as well as facility maintenance. Nicole says, “resource navigation capacity for families.” Mellody says, “funding, access to licensing consultants.” “Ratio flexibility.” Those are all excellent points. Our team will be sending out a survey soon regarding your experiences with funding mechanisms offered by the state. And so, one of the questions regards the question that I'm asking right now, so it'd be great to hear your input. Ann says, “Parents that can afford childcare with good benefits and jobs.”

My last question for you all is what recommendations do you have on how this map can better support your work? Jen said, “Quality staffing. Some providers have a wait list but don't have staffing.” Great point, Jen. And that tacks onto wages and funding as well. They're all interconnected. Nicole suggests, “Might it be possible to look at providers in pre-licensure or applying for new or expanding facilities as a way to see those in the supply pipeline?” That's a great question.

Schlukebir:Okay. Yeah, so that is something that MiLEAP looks at, especially in relation to the Caring for MI Future Initiative. Pre-licensure grants were a part of that, a crucial part. So that is something that the state is looking at. I don't know how publicly available that analysis is. However, it is something that can be looked at and seen how it relates to providers. However, I've seen the data, and one thing about that is, providers applying for pre-licensure, those kind of supports tend to be very siloed into specific communities. Like, they are not as… applicants are not as widely distributed around the state. So yes, it could be an analysis that could be done, but it might be not as robust just because, again, very siloed. So, that is something when you're reaching out or talking to providers, make sure highlighting those caring for my future or other initiatives when they're available is really crucial.

Wu:I want to get back to a previous question that asked about, does the license provider data taking into consideration active or inactive status posed by Nicole. Yes, if they are inactive, they are the red dots on the map saying they are closed. That's not true, Holli?

Schlukebir:No, it's not because to be closed, that means that their license… their license is terminated, but someone can be inactive and still licensed, so they still would show up on the map, not necessarily as closed.

Wu:Oh, okay. Marissa, is that all questions do you have?

Castellana**:** Yes. Thank you to somebody before mentioned about another recommendation being layering the Child Opportunity Index and economic sector. I just wanted to bring that up as another answer to this question about recommendations.

Schlukebir:And those are recommendations that we will actively apply after this meeting, so we really appreciate that. So, when the recording for the webinar goes out, you will probably likely see the map looks different than what it does. Yeah, so, “What does inactive mean for the MSU map?” We are looking at… Our analysis doesn't take into consideration inactive. The data that we get is just a list of these are all the providers who are operating at this point. We don't actually get that niche data if they are considered active or inactive based on, for example, if an operator chooses not to operate during a certain window, if they're facing some kind of licensing constraints that makes them temporary ineligible to operate, stuff like that. We don't have that niche kind of data. We just look at everyone who has a current license within that snapshot… within that data snapshot. Yeah. Does that provide clarification? It's… it's… it's kind of difficult because we… we really don't we don't have that kind of granular information, especially because again, we are looking at yearly pills. So that might change from day-to-day, variation to variation. So…

Wu: Yeah, even myself got confused. So, we're going to update that description on the website, so it provides some clarity with you. Then, for all these other comments or suggestions or questions, whether data are available or not, we would compile them all, and then, do what we can to update with the remaining questions. We will check with MiLEAP to see whether there's data available that we can put together and present that with you.

Is there any other questions or comments? All right. Cool. Then that would be it for today. Thank you very much. I think the map conference, the webinars, will be in the fall, is that right? Yeah. We would work with MiLEAP again and then share what the next few ones are and then also follow up with you with the webinar recording and the updated map address. Thank you very much. Okay. Talk to you later. Bye-bye.

Schlukebir**:** Thank you. Bye.

Wu:Bye.