

Nominee: **Dara Wilson**

Running for: **Member At Large**



Nomination Statement:

Hello, I am Dara Wilson. I nominate myself for a member-at-large position. I am the mother of four amazing individuals. My youngest son, age thirteen, has an IEP and has been receiving services since the first grade. During this time, I've acquired experience advocating for special education on both sides of the table, as a parent and professional.

Years ago, I volunteered regularly at a local Detroit Head Start Agency while my children attended the program. As a parent volunteer, I became the chairperson for the agency's Parent Committee and Policy Council. I facilitated meetings and shared administrative information with parents. The agency offered me education in Child Development and employment. I worked as a Special Needs Assistant for fifteen years.

As a Special Needs Assistant, I helped identify young children, ages 0-5, that may have needed additional services. I also provided information and support to families of newly diagnosed children, easing them into special education and advocating for their children once they exited Head Start. Additionally, I assisted the disability coordinator with staff professional development planning. I worked closely with DPSCD service providers, coordinating services with (EO) Early Intervention Diagnostic Center, and assisted with compliance monitoring/tracking of LEA IFSP/IEP services provided at Head Start centers. I also had the pleasure of attending the annual Michigan CEC conferences in Grand Rapids and Early Childhood Conferences to enhance my knowledge statewide.

Currently, I continue to advocate for my son, as I train, inform, and empower parents in advocacy as a Regional Parent Mentor for Michigan Alliance for Families. I want to strengthen my leadership skills and knowledge to continue to build strong advocates in Special Education, increase professional networking, and become more involved in policy making decisions on all levels.

Thank you for your consideration.