

Patricia Sorenson

From: Patricia Sorenson
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To: sorenson.pat@michiganschildren.org
Subject: Opportunities to Inform Candidates About the Importance of Early Childhood Investments!
Attachments: 7_12_K-12_Update Final School Aid Language.doc; Complete Toolkit_All Pages[1].pdf; IssuesBrief_EarlyEd_7_26.doc; Sandbox Flyer Final.pdf; Updated 7 22 10 Sandbox Rocks Video Contest Flyer.pdf; why does michigan need a sandbox party_vFINAL_2010_7_1.pdf; FMAP Extension_071910.pdf

State Budget Update

As the summer passes quickly, and the beginning of the new fiscal year grows closer, Michigan lawmakers are still struggling with options for addressing Michigan's ongoing structural budget deficit. One fiscal year 2010-2011 budget, K-12 School Aid, has been approved and signed into law. In signing the K-12 School Aid budget, the Governor used her veto power to remove \$1.5 million for the 0-3 Secondary Prevention program—funding that was contingent on new revenues being adopted by the Legislature. ***A summary of the final K-12 School Aid budget bill is attached.***

Complicating the budget debates is the failure by Congress to pass legislation to provide a six-month extension of higher federal contributions to state Medicaid programs. As part of the federal stimulus package (American Recovery & Reinvestment Act of 2009), Congress temporarily increased the Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP), but the more generous federal match is scheduled to expire on December 31st of this year. Although Congress initially signaled its intention to extend the increased FMAP through June 30, 2011, fears over the growing federal budget deficit derailed the legislation.

If the more favorable FMAP expires in December of this year, Michigan will lose approximately \$560 million in federal funds—*dollars that have already been assumed in the budgets passed by the Michigan Legislature*. Last week, Senate Majority Leader Mike Bishop indicated that Senate Republicans were preparing budget cuts that would strip the entire \$560 million from the budgets already passed. The Governor told reporters that based on feedback from officials in Washington D.C., she is still hoping for some continued increase in the FMAP, but the best Michigan could hope for would be an additional \$300 million. The Governor is developing a proposal to address the deficit, and is looking at all options, including revenues.

If Congress does not extend the enhanced FMAP, deep cuts in early childhood programs will likely be necessary. ***Attached is an action alert to help you call on Congress to act now to protect funding for basic services for children through an FMAP extension.***

Opportunities to Inform Candidates About the Importance of Early Childhood Investments!

In November, Michigan citizens will elect a new governor, attorney general, and state senators and representatives. Those elected officials will influence for years to come the priority given to young children in the state budget and policymaking. Now is the time to educate candidates about the need to invest in our youngest citizens. The research is clear: the single best predictor of economic prosperity is a state's success in educating and preparing its workforce, and the path that holds the greatest promise for educational achievement is the investment in young children!

Check out Michigan's Children's Election Advocacy Toolkit! Michigan's Children is working with other advocacy partners to inform voters and candidates about the issues facing young children, as well as to provide useful tools and resources for advocacy. Go to www.michiganschildren.org and click on the "Vote for Michigan's children" logo to access those resources, including an election advocacy toolkit and an issue brief for candidates on access to early childhood services (both attached).

Join the Sandbox Party! The Early Childhood Investment Corporation, its 55 Great Start Collaboratives, over 70 Parent Coalitions, Regional Resources Centers, and Michigan’s early childhood advocacy partners—including Michigan’s Children—have formed a “Sandbox Party,” a nonpartisan, nonpolitical party to represent the interests of Michigan’s youngest residents. The goal of the party is to inform candidates, policymakers and the public about the crucial role young children play in Michigan’s economic turnaround, and the importance of prioritizing state investments in early childhood.

Join us for the Sandbox Party Convention on Thursday, August 26th from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. at the Breslin Student Event Center in East Lansing, and invite those in your networks and neighborhoods! Attached are: (1) a flyer describing the Sandbox Convention that you are encouraged to distribute broadly, (2) background materials on the Sandbox Party and why Michigan needs it; and (3) a flyer describing a “Sandbox Rocks” video contest to help capture compelling stories about how early childhood investments have helped you and your family. For more information on the Convention and to register, go to www.greatstartforkids.org.

Find out more about the candidates by checking out the resources of the Center for Michigan, and sign an online petition urging greater investments in education! The Center for Michigan works to strengthen the voices of citizens, as well as the connection between Michigan residents and their political leaders. The Center’s website includes coverage of gubernatorial candidate debates (*Great Debates 2010*); in-depth reporting on the issues and candidates’ positions, including those related to early childhood; and a 2010 citizens’ agenda entitled *10,000 Voices to Transform Our State*. To access these resources, go to www.thecenterformichigan.net.

The Center for Michigan is also circulating several online citizens’ petitions, including one related to education that supports improved and stable funding for public preschool programs, K-12 education, community colleges and universities. To view and sign the petitions, go to <http://www.michiganpetitions.org/>

As always, please let me know if I can help you in any way in your advocacy for young children, and I appreciate any feedback you can provide me about your communications with candidates and lawmakers.

Pat

Patricia Sorenson
Vice President for Policy
Michigan's Children
428 W. Lenawee
Lansing, MI 48933
sorenson.pat@michiganschildren.org

Go to www.michiganschildren.org to join our:

