



## **For Immediate Release**

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Contact: Jack Kresnak

(517) 485-3500 Office

(313) 550-6497 Cellular

[jack@michiganschildren.org](mailto:jack@michiganschildren.org)

## ***Challenge to New Governor, Legislature: Create Michigan's Future By Investing in Kids***

*LANSING* – As Michigan prepares to induct a new Governor and Legislature, child advocates are launching a concentrated campaign to ensure that kids are a priority of the new leadership and a key piece of economic reform efforts.

Working with partner groups at the local, state and national levels, Michigan's Children is devoting 2011 to enacting public policy and investments that will aid in creating skilled, educated workers to lead Michigan's economic future.

"We cannot talk about a bright future for Michigan without including the children who *will be* our future," said Jack Kresnak, President & CEO of Michigan's Children. "Small investments now will reap huge rewards for us all."

Top economists and scientists agree that investing in children – from birth through young adulthood – is a solid investment in Michigan's future. Every \$1 spent on high quality early care and education for low-income kids saves \$17 in special education, crime, welfare and other costs to taxpayers.

Currently in Michigan:

**1 of every 3** kindergarteners are not ready to learn, according to the teachers who work with them every day, and the special attention they need affects all students in the classroom.

**2 of every 3** kids in publicly-subsidized child care are in unregulated care, where little is known about safety or quality — a rate much higher than other states.

**1 of every 4** children under age 6 lives in poverty.

**1 of every 4** students did not graduate in 2009 after four years of high school

**1 of every 3** high school dropouts were living near the poverty level in 2006, compared to 17% of those with high school diplomas and 5% of those with Bachelor's degrees.

This does not lead to prosperous predictions for Michigan's future workforce. Policymakers can change this course starting with these first steps in 2011:

- Create a prenatal-to-age-20 (P-20) council or task force that can develop and maintain a high quality cradle to career education system.
- Increase access to high quality preschool programs for at-risk four-year-olds.
- Ensure that at least 20 percent of all new funding for Michigan's state-funded preschool program is used to support evidence-based services for children ages 0 to 3.
- Provide access for at-risk families to proven family support programs, including home visiting services.

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- Support multiple pathways to graduation: better support those that we have, such as alternative and community education options, community college and workforce development partnerships; and create other pathways to consistently serve young people throughout the state.
- Commit to meaningful education reform by supporting consistent funding for schools and programs in order to see real improvement in school success for those most challenged schools, communities and young people.
- Establish incentives for schools to create community links aimed at strengthening educational opportunities and increasing parent involvement.
- Support innovative after-school programs in middle and high schools, including credit recovery programs and apprenticeships.
- Provide incentives for schools to establish effective discipline alternatives, and support truancy prevention and credit recovery initiatives that utilize strong out-of-school time, higher education and workforce development partners.
- Support federal and state reforms guaranteeing insurance for all kids and access to health care.
- Adequately fund evidence-based public health programs that promote access to prenatal care and reduce high mortality and morbidity rates for African-American and other at-risk infants and children.

This agenda for children will guide our work over the next year, as topics for public forums with youths, other advocates, communities and policy makers, targeted work with legislative and administrative leaders, and release of new research and reports.

“We are not advocating for just throwing money at potential solutions,” Mr. Kresnak said. “These are policy reforms and programs with proven returns, and the cost of not investing now in tomorrow’s workers and leaders far exceeds the expense.

“Without investments in young children, the state’s attempts to improve educational achievement will fail. Without investments in these same children once they enter school, the state’s attempts to increase high school graduation rates will fail. And without investments in these same young people who struggle to stay engaged with school or have already become disengaged, the state’s attempts to expand access to higher education and modernize its economy will fail.

The result of not investing: A large number of poorly educated adults who are unqualified to hold jobs that pay a living wage, who are less likely to be married, who will drain public resources to pay for prisons and welfare – a result that is bad for business and bad for communities. Instead, let’s start building the workforce Michigan needs.”

Michigan’s Children is a statewide, nonpartisan and nonprofit organization committed to speaking out for the well-being of children and their families at the federal, state and local levels of government. Since 1992, Michigan’s Children has become a recognized leader in the development of public policy, a source of reliable information on a wide range of issues affecting children and families, and a strong partner for communities. We believe in equal opportunity, prevention, civic engagement, and collaboration to create a Michigan where all children have the opportunity to thrive.

For more about Michigan’s Children, go to [www.michiganschildren.org](http://www.michiganschildren.org).

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children have the opportunity to thrive.***