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Kids Count Proves Need to Invest in Whole Child *Health, Safety, Education and Economic Security Work Together*

LANSING – Michigan’s Children President & CEO Jack Kresnak issued the following statement regarding today’s release of the Kids Count in Michigan Data Book 2010:

“While there is some good news in this report, it also shows us our children are suffering and need our attention now more than ever if they are to be successful in school and life.

We have more kids living in poverty, more kids being abused and neglected, and almost a third of all babies receiving less than adequate prenatal care, contributing to the rising number of low-birthweight babies who are at greater risk of physical and developmental delays. Each of these factors is a hit to the future prosperity of our children, and thus, our state’s economic viability as resources are diverted and potential revenues are lost.

We can’t ignore the huge role economic security, health and personal safety play in a child’s ability to learn. Children with rumbling tummies, and abused children worried about hiding fresh injuries can’t give their full attention to their lessons. These are just a few of the reasons Michigan needs to adopt a P-20 Council that Governor Snyder mentioned in his State of the State address last month.

A P-20 council adopts a cradle-to-career vision, representing a commitment to the education of our children starting prenatal and extending through college by joining the many factors that influence a child’s ability to learn so that they work to optimize their success. The councils already existing in 38 states utilize a coordinated approach to align programming, funding and expectations by identifying, creating, incentivizing and supporting interagency, public/private partnerships toward an end goal of educational and workforce success for all young people.

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Failure to adopt and invest in a cradle to career philosophy also negatively impacts the state budget. Research shows that every \$1 invested in high quality early care and education services for low-income children reaps a return to society of more than \$17 — a return on investment that has convinced leading economists of the importance of starting early. A recent study shows that Michigan saved \$1.1 billion in 2009 alone due to investments made in the state’s school readiness efforts over the past 25 years, with savings accruing from reduced costs related to K-12 education, child abuse and neglect, crime, public assistance, and substance abuse.

And while the new Data Book shows a 25 percent decrease in the number of high school dropouts from 2007 to 2009, there remain 16,124 teens who left school without a diploma in 2009. These kids are at greater risk of unemployment, poverty, substance abuse, incarceration, and poor health — all of which will cost the state and communities.

To ensure a brighter future for our state and for all of our children, and improvements in child trends in coming years, Michigan’s legislators must establish a P-20 Council in law, provide resources to support it, and broadly define its role to maximize leveraging opportunities.”

Read an Issues Brief on P-20 Councils and get more information about necessary steps for Michigan’s economic recovery, at www.michiganschildren.org. To schedule an interview with Mr. Kresnak or Michele Corey, please call (517) 485-3500.

Kids Count in Michigan is a partnership between the Michigan League for Human Services and Michigan's Children - two organizations committed to providing information about the status of children and families in Michigan communities and the role of public policy in impacting that status. This knowledge can then be used to improve policies and practices to make Michigan children healthier, safer and more successful in school and in life.

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*Michigan’s Children is a statewide, independent voice for children and their families.
We work with lawmakers, business leaders and communities to make Michigan a place where all children
have the opportunity to thrive.*