

July 12, 2017

Public Comment: Michigan Model Code of Student Conduct

Michigan's Children is the only statewide independent voice working to ensure that the needs and priorities of children, youth and families who shoulder the most challenging circumstances are met. We recently submitted a public comment on the State Board of Education's draft of a [Model Code of Student Conduct](#). The model code of conduct will be a tool for school districts as they update their own local codes of conduct. Every child deserves a space to learn free of fear, and we are hopeful that this model code of conduct, with some changes to emphasize trauma-informed care and to better meet the needs of students facing suspension or expulsion, will help cultivate safe and supportive school environments for Michigan's children.

Read our public comment below, and submit your own [here](#) by Friday, July 14.

Date: July 12, 2017
To: Michigan State Board of Education
From: Michigan's Children
Re: Public Comment on the Model Code of Student Conduct

Thank you very much for your work on the Model Code of Student Conduct. Our comments are below:

Page 2: Thousands of Michigan schoolchildren suffer the effects of trauma every day. Michigan's educational practices must follow trauma-informed principles in addition to integrating social-emotional learning and other evidence-based reports.

Page 7 crosses out a reference to a list of pro bono or legal assistance. We urge that legal assistance be made public, as youth and families often do not know where to look for help. At the least, we urge that children and families be notified of their legal rights during a school exclusion proceeding in the Code of Conduct.

Pages 12-15, 24, and 34 contain references to previously mandated expulsions that should be removed. Leaving these sections in does not reflect the intent of recent legislation. Also, it is unclear who, under the new law, must apply for reinstatement (other than those expelled for firearms) as outlined on Page 15. Does any expelled student have to apply for reinstatement or only those expelled for firearms? This needs to be made clear.

Page 17: Many students in Michigan are expelled with no services to help them. Michigan must provide services for students who have been suspended or expelled from school. We would

highlight the need for services for children who are excluded from school. During a recent panel on rethinking youth discipline, one student told the room, “Suspending a kid isn’t really solving the issue.” Students say that even in-school suspensions sometimes escalate a situation, saying that in-school suspensions just box them in with other troublesome kids. Students want administrators and mentors who care, and they deserve the support to work through their lives regardless of their school attendance.

Page 26: Violation of Code of Conduct: School district staff “may” use should be changed to “should” use. It should be noted that the new law states that restorative practices should be the first consideration to remediate offenses such as interpersonal conflicts, bullying, verbal and physical conflicts, theft, damage to property, class disruption, and harassment and cyberbullying.

Michigan’s Children remains committed to ensuring that public policies are made in the best interests of children, from cradle to career. We appreciate your continued work for students across the state and look forward to working with you on future issues.