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Immediate Release

News Release

Newaygo Area Youths to Lead Candidate Forum for Office-Seekers in the 34th State Senate and 100th State House Districts on Oct. 19 at Dogwood Center

Fremont, Mich. – In a departure from typical election-year forums, Michigan's Children will host a forum for candidates running in the **34th State Senate and 100th State House districts on Friday, Oct. 19, 2018**, with area youth drawing from their own experiences to ask the questions. Students from Newaygo and Grant High Schools, the Youth Advisory Committee of Fremont Area Community Foundation, and Project FOCUS, an out-of-school time initiative of TrueNorth Community Services are involved. This forum is also supported by the Michigan After-School Partnership. Every government class at Newaygo High School will be participating in the forum, as well as many other young people from surrounding communities.

The non-partisan forum is scheduled for **9:30-11 a.m.** at the **Dogwood Center for the Performing Arts, 4734 S. Campus Court, Fremont**. Candidates will be given equal time for each answer. Teens played a key role in planning the forum, including making contacts with campaigns to secure participation, and generating the questions. Twenty students will step forward to pose the questions.

"Unfortunately, our state currently fails many of its youngest citizens," said Matt Gillard, President and CEO of Michigan's Children, the Lansing-based public policy and advocacy group. "Data in the annual Kids Count reports shows us that 75% of students in Newaygo County are not graduating ready for college or a career, and that the number of Newaygo County children in foster care more than doubled from 2010 to 2016. Elected officials must be able to listen to the youth and families in their community who want solutions to these issues."

The forum is one in a series sponsored by Michigan's Children, a statewide advocacy and public policy organization, and 25 other nonprofits and agencies. Other forums in Bay City, Lansing, Rochester, Wyoming, Holland, Novi, Jackson and Kalamazoo will explore and compare candidates' positions on the shortcomings of the **state's child care system, juvenile justice, family stability** including economic struggles, **childhood trauma and toxic stress, adult and child literacy**, improvements in **K-12 education**, and **access to mental health services**. The intent is to help office-seekers develop a deeper understanding of the challenges facing today's children and families.

"Michigan ranks at or near the bottom third of states in a range of child well-being indicators, from low reading and math test scores to rising abuse and neglect rates to the sixth-highest rate of children living in high-poverty neighborhoods in the country," said Gillard. "For this to turn around, we desperately need informed office-seekers to hear from the kids and families they want to serve and to understand there are strong policy solutions in each of these areas."

Michigan's Children is the only statewide, independent voice working to ensure that public policies are made in the best interest of children, from cradle to career, and their families.



Fremont Area Community Foundation's Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) is comprised of 24 high school students representing Fremont, Grant, Hesperia, Newaygo, and White Cloud public high schools and the homeschooling

community. YAC members advise the Community Foundation's board on issues regarding local youth, develop leadership skills, and evaluate YAC grant applications. YAC awards thousands of dollars in grant support each year to organizations and programs that address the needs of local youth.



Newaygo High School is committed to educating their students by bringing four government classes to this forum.



Project FOCUS (For Our Children's Ultimate Success) is an out-of-school program that has a mission to promote quality, motivated citizens through safe and fun educational enrichment. They accomplish this through mentoring, civic engagement, college and

career preparation, social and emotional learning, high adventure and academic enrichment activities



The Michigan After-School Partnership (MASP) is a statewide afterschool network focused on actively engaging and educating key decision makers in support of effective school and community based afterschool and summer programs that provide opportunities so that all students reach their full potential and are prepared for the jobs of tomorrow.