

To: Senators Debbie Stabenow and Gary Peters

Date: July 24, 2020

Re: Supporting the Essential Needs of Children, Youth, and Families

As the federal government makes its next steps during this crisis, we the undersigned organizations urge you to recognize the dramatic increased challenges that families in our state have faced by supporting dramatically increased resources for essential supports and services that will uphold the well-being of our state's families and communities, based what we have learned from the voices of children, families, and professionals who serve them. All of these investments are included in recent proposals from your colleagues. All are essential to positioning our state to weather the crisis and ultimately, and will bolster the effectiveness of direct aid for state and local governments.

Child Abuse Prevention and Services

With increased family stress exacerbated by high unemployment, close proximity and a lack of service access for children and youth with disabilities, delays or mental and physical health needs, it is unlikely that funding available will be enough to fully support families. During this time of increased stress and in this pandemic's wake, our state needs dedicated funds for community-based supports to strengthen families, and for increasing the state's ability to safely prevent, investigate, and treat child abuse and neglect. Young people aging out of the foster care system are also particularly vulnerable due to the instability of the moment and deserve effective supports.

- \$1.5 billion for child abuse prevention via the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), including for tribal and migrant communities.
- \$1 billion through Title IV-B Part 2 for programs and services that help to stabilize families
- \$500 million to support older youth in and leaving foster care through the Chafee program, removing some individual spending caps and extending eligibility.
- \$30 million to reinforce court functions to continue critical hearings, family reunification activities and other critical supports through the Court Improvement Program.
- \$20 million to increase access to Kinship Navigator programs for high-risk caregivers

Child Care

Families continue to work, or make difficult choices about work because of tough child care decisions, and more are resorting to new care arrangements at least for the time being. In this time of upheaval, we must ensure that high-quality affordable child care stays viable and available for all families.

- \$50 billion via the Child Care and Development Block Grant

Equitable Educational Supports

As our state develops plans to reopen, it is clear that increased resources will need to be marshaled to provide the learning resources that many students, and their families, will need, especially resources that meet the early educational needs of children and families who shoulder significant challenges.

- \$12.9 billion in support for K-12 schools with higher numbers of children from low-income families, migrant communities, and neglected and/or delinquent youth
- \$12 billion for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), including \$11 billion for K-12 (Part B), \$500 million for infant and toddlers (Part C), and \$400 million for preschool programs (Sec 619)

- \$4 billion for schools to purchase discounted computers, tablets, internet services
- \$1 billion to increase access to adult education and family literacy programs
- \$500 million for the Education for Homeless Children and Youths program
- \$500 million immediate increase in 21st CCLC to address the increased need for summer learning and afterschool programs to help students at risk for learning loss
- \$450 million for TRIO programs, which help unemployed and low-income adults earn high school credentials and apply for college, and financial flexibility for HBCUs
- Additional Education Stabilization Fund grants for K-12 schools and higher education

Health Care Access

Medicaid pays for nearly half of all births in Michigan and covers a greater share of births in rural areas, among young women, women of color and women with lower levels of educational attainment. The current 6.2% federal Medicaid share (FMAP rate) increase has meant hundreds of millions that can be utilized in Michigan to adjust for caseload increases but more support is needed. FMAP rate increases also support our state's ability to provide mental and behavioral health services to youth and families.

- Increase FMAP rate, maintain the increase until the state is economically stable, and require states to maintain coverage for anyone enrolled on/after March 18 beyond the federal emergency declaration while preserving current benefits and rates to providers.

Housing

Recent income boosts, as well as eviction moratoriums, are coming to an end. Many parents and young adults have lost income during the pandemic and will struggle to cover back-rent once it comes due. Without rental assistance, these households will face the destabilizing impacts of evictions and, in worst cases, homelessness. Young people experiencing homelessness are especially vulnerable to contracting the disease, and once infected are more likely to require critical care and to die from COVID-19. This has enormous implications for families, their communities, and our already overstretched hospital systems.

- Provide \$100 billion in emergency rental assistance. Research estimates at least \$100 billion in emergency rental assistance is needed to help keep the lowest-income renters stably housed.
- Uniform, 12-month eviction and foreclosure moratorium to protect all renters and homeowners
- \$13 billion for emergency housing vouchers targeted to people with the greatest needs, such as families experiencing or at risk of homelessness and survivors of domestic violence.
- \$11.5 billion in Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) funding to provide the full funding needed to prevent and respond to outbreaks among people experiencing homelessness.

Resource Stability

The income support measures of the CARES Act [kept families out of poverty](#). Families continue to struggle to afford their basic needs, and many who have made it by thanks to the CARES Act are facing difficult future choices ahead. We must continue to maintain a stronger unemployment system than we had before, and the best "return to work" bonus is continued investment into hard-working parents, caregivers, and youth with enough resources to support themselves and their families.

- Support proposed unemployment eligibility expansions including around work and educational history and increased benefits than what existed before the crisis.
- Prioritize income supports through the Earned Income Tax Credit, including lowering the age eligibility threshold, in addition to one-time stimulus payments.

Workforce Development

The pandemic crisis has precipitated massive workforce shifts. In addition to basic skill training for adults who have been hit hardest by pandemic-related unemployment, we must prepare parents, young adults and young people to assume high-skill, high-wage, and in-demand careers.

- \$2 billion to support community colleges and consortia to develop and scale career training programs that support high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand industry sectors and occupations
- \$1 billion to support state grants for career and technical education programs

Thank you for your work on behalf of children, youth, and families in Michigan. Please prioritize these issues in your efforts this month.

Sincerely,

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