

Dear Child Advocate,

Hope you are doing well. Michigan's Children has been transitioning some of our technology, which has not been as smooth as we were anticipating. Until we get the kinks worked out, you'll be receiving Michigan's Children's e-bulletins the old fashioned way – through direct emails.

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Michigan's Children Welcomes New President & CEO Matt Gillard

It is with great excitement that the Board of Directors for Michigan's Children announces the addition of former state Representative Matt Gillard as President and CEO.

Mr. Gillard, who represented the 106th District in the Michigan House of Representatives from 2002 to 2008, brings a history of proven leadership on key issues affecting children, youths and families, combined with a deep knowledge of the latest research and practices to improve conditions and increase wise investments.

"Whether working across the aisle on tough budget issues or looking for new ways to solve persistent problems, Matt always has displayed a commitment to improving the lives of Michiganders, especially our youngest and most vulnerable," said Terry Murphy, Chairman of Michigan's Children Board of Directors. "We are thrilled to have him lead Michigan's only statewide multi-issue children's advocacy organization. With his guidance, Michigan's Children will be a stronger advocacy presence, and the children of Michigan will be better off for it."

[Read our press release](#) to learn more about Matt.

[Read Matt's first President's Message](#) as he takes the helm of Michigan's Children.

Michigan's Fiscal Year 2015 Budget Update

As Michigan becomes more diverse, funding decisions that do not explicitly address underlying inequities in resource and opportunity will lead to longer-term fiscal hardships for all Michigan residents. It is with this lens that our state's budget must be crafted. Last month, Governor Snyder released his budget recommendation for fiscal year 2015 (FY2015), which begins October 1, 2014 and runs through September 30, 2015. The House and Senate Appropriations Committees have been learning about the Governor's budget recommendation and taking

testimony as they develop their own budget proposals for FY2015. It is anticipated that the Appropriations Subcommittees in each chamber will release their budget recommendations in the next several weeks. Our latest Budget Basics publications provide overviews of key provisions in the Governor's budget that will impact children, and focus on those provisions that can work to reduce disparities in child outcomes. Visit our [Budget Basics library](#) to learn more about what Governor Snyder is proposing for fiscal year 2015 and how you can influence budget decisions to ensure that they prioritize Michigan children and families:

[The Governor's Fiscal Year 2015 Budget: Is It Promoting Equity to Ensure All Children Are Ready to Learn & Lead? \(3/3/2014\)](#)

[Fiscal Year 2015 Budget: What the Governor is Proposing for Youth in Michigan \(2/24/2014\)](#)

[Fiscal Year 2015 Budget: What the Governor is Proposing for Early Childhood in Michigan \(2/18/2014\)](#)

[The Budget Process in Michigan: Opportunities to Advocate for Children & Families \(7/2013\)](#)

Also, read our latest Speaking for Kids staff blog by Mina Hong – [Equity vs. Equality and the State Budget](#) – to learn more about how the state budget can impact equitable outcomes for children.

President Obama Releases Fiscal Year 2015 Budget Recommendation

This week, President Obama released his budget recommendation for the federal fiscal year 2015, which runs from October 1, 2014 through September 30, 2015. As anticipated, the President continued to push his Preschool for All Initiative to provide all low- and moderate-income four-year-olds with access to high-quality preschool; extend and expand evidence-based, voluntary home visiting programs; and increase access to high-quality infant and toddler care through Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships. The President's proposal also includes several initiatives to watch that will impact youth, including one focused on improving behavioral health services to young people in foster care. Another proposal that is more concerning is to expand the use of 21st Century Community Learning Centers beyond its well evaluated current focus on quality before- and after-school and summer learning programs that represent partnerships between schools and other community resources.

Learn more about the President's budget proposal including fact sheets (one that highlights provisions impacting children and youth) on the [White House website](#).

Connecting the Voices of Youth With Policymakers Continues to be a Priority

As we have for the last 17 years, Michigan's Children continues to create opportunities for young people to share their stories, concerns and suggestions directly with policymakers, and we are always working to find new ways to provide young people and the supporting adults around them the tools that they need to advocate on their own behalf. The past few months have been busy ones with a Statewide KidSpeak® at the Capitol Building on December 10, 2013, with

Michigan Radio and Legislative hosts State Representatives Robert VerHeulen and Robert Kosowski, and State Senators Judy Emmons and Vincent Gregory.

On January 27, we partnered with the Washtenaw Alliance for Children and Youth, the Washtenaw Intermediate School District and State Representative David Rutledge for a local KidSpeak® held in the Washtenaw County Chambers. On February 24, we partnered with the Park West Foundation, Foster Care Alumni of America-Michigan Chapter, Michigan Youth Opportunity Initiative and the Oakland County Board of Commissioners for a local KidSpeak® held in the Oakland County Chambers focused specifically on the concerns and opportunities for kids aging out of the foster care system.

What we learn from young people helps to shape our policy priorities and other work throughout the year. You can read some of our initial reactions to these events in our blog posts:

- [Taking the Challenge \(2/27/2014\)](#)
- [Building Champions for Education and Life Success \(1/28/2014\)](#)
- [Seventeen Years of Expert Testimony \(12/16/2013\)](#)

If you are interested in working with us to facilitate youth voice in your community, please [contact Michele Corey](#).

Be a Part of the Center for Michigan's Community Conversations

Our partner at the Center for Michigan periodically travels the state holding Community Conversations to gather and amplify the voices of Michigan citizens. The Center then creates a final report with the findings of each conversation campaign and amplifies the ideas and views shared to policymakers. The goal of the Community Conversation project is to ensure that policy discussions taking place in Lansing reflect the views of Michigan people. Currently, the Center for Michigan is holding Community Conversations to prepare for the 2014 elections by listening to the people of Michigan about their priorities for our state in 2014 and beyond. We know that candidates and elected officials look to these Community Conversations to help identify their priorities, so your voice on behalf of Michigan children is important. This year's Community Conversations will focus on the economy and prosperity, education, quality of life, and public money priorities.

[Visit the Center for Michigan website](#) to learn more about Community Conversations, to participate in one near you, or to take the online survey if you can't participate in person.

Latest Speaking for Kids Staff Blogs

[Equity vs. Equality and the State Budget](#) by Mina Hong (March 6, 2014)

[Taking The Challenge](#) by Michele Corey (February 27, 2014)

[Child Care Realities](#) by Mina Hong (February 19, 2014)

[Building Champions for Education and Life Success](#) by Michele Corey (January 28, 2014)
[Raising Our Voices in 2014](#) by Michele Corey (January 24, 2014)

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