



Unresolved Road Fix Gives Us another Chance to Maintain General Funds for Kids & Families

By Matt Gillard

The Michigan Legislature's failure this week to create a road funding solution before breaking session gives advocates like us yet another important opportunity to press our point. We need a good solution to the state's road and bridge problems that doesn't rob critical general fund programs that support children and families.

Most important to their well-being is ensuring that already underfunded programs that help improve opportunities for children, youth and families remain intact, even grow in subsequent budgets. For that to happen, our elected officials should not divert general fund dollars for the repair of our critically ill roads' infrastructure which has been tagged to need as much as \$1.2 billion a year in spending just to get Michigan back on track. Truly, that kind of tough action needs dedicated dollars best coming from new revenues including higher gas-and-fuel taxes – and not by cutting programs that support our kids and families including the state's modest Earned Income Tax Credit for tax-paying working families of limited means.

While we too care about fixing our roads as soon as possible, we must consider the outcome of these actions. We were pleased that the so-called 600/600 plan, a proposal to cut \$600 million a year from the general fund with the rest coming from anticipated new state revenues, didn't muster the needed votes this week to prevail. Subsequently in recent days, Governor Snyder, Senate Majority Leader Arlan Meekhof and legislative Democratic leaders are aiming for a plan that raises \$800 million from new revenues with \$300 million coming from the state general fund.

The big take-away from this week is that we need a rational road plan for Michigan that includes new revenues. It's just a bad idea to redirect money from general funds to roads, and sacrifice the well-being of Michigan families, harming future outcomes too for our youth and children.

The state Legislature is off for the next few weeks now and won't return until after the Sept. 8 Labor Day holiday. You can bet the big dance over where to get the money for roads will begin anew then. Reach out to your legislators and urge them to support a road plan that includes significant new revenues that protects important programs serving our state's children, youth and families.