

Michigan's Children Sets 2016 Policy Priorities to Improve Odds for all Children and Families in Michigan

January 13, 2016 -- Michigan's Children is excited and ready to launch into 2016 with a keen focus on [key policy priorities](#) to help close equity gaps and improve odds for all children, youth and families in Michigan. Your expertise and willingness to speak out, raise awareness and mobilize support for new investments and policy changes are critical. There are many challenges facing children and families in Michigan this year and we need your help in letting decision makers know we expect them to prioritize solving these challenges. Here's a summary of what we're pushing for this year, [so please join us](#). Together we can make Michigan a great place to be a child and raise a family.

Starting Early

In addition to ensuring that the state's strong commitment to preschool is maintained and that we continue to strengthen our child care system, Michigan's Children will continue to lead efforts to increase available early intervention services through [Early On](#). *Early On* serves families with infants and toddlers birth to age three who have a developmental delay or disability, and the program has no dedicated funding stream to support services unlike the majority of other states.

Supporting Families

Michigan's Children continues to maintain that a two-generation strategy for public investment makes the greatest impact for improving child outcomes and family prosperity. Toward that goal, we will continue to promote voluntary parent coaching and supports through evidence-based home visiting which are proven to be successful. Additionally, we will continue to identify the need to increase investments in adult education and specifically [family literacy programming](#) as part of statewide effort to improve 3rd grade reading.

Addressing Trauma

More and more we're learning about the impact of trauma and toxic stress on children's development in school and at home. This year Michigan's Children will continue efforts to help educate decision-makers' about the impact of trauma and toxic stress and support efforts to provide [trauma-informed professional development](#) for educators and school personnel. Likewise, we will put the spotlight on renewing state investments in services that prevent trauma in the first place. Also, as we continue to help raise up the voices of children and families in the state's child welfare system, we will work with policy-makers on passing a meaningful [Children's Assurance of Quality Foster Care Act](#) and other improvements to the state's child welfare system.

Expanding Educational Services

Unless there is consistent and equitable funding for K-12 in Michigan, opportunities for learning and advancement will remain uneven leaving too many children behind. One proven strategy to

shrink equity gaps is to develop integrated school services/community schools and adequately fund things like school-based health services. Look to Michigan's Children to continue to define and recommend how Michigan should incentivize quality models of integrated student services/community schools.

Most importantly, we will be building new allies and strengthening community voices to promote significant increased investment in [expanded learning opportunities](#) that model the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program, improving access to and quality of after-school and summer learning options. The children who most need learning opportunities beyond the school day and year are often the least likely to get them.

What Comes Next?

The Governor will propose his priorities and budget recommendations for fiscal year 2017 soon, beginning a budget process that will require attention and action from child and family advocates through the next year. Trust that we will remain actively tuned into what is proposed, what should be proposed and how other voices can best impact those conversations. The election season also provides new opportunities to get involved.

Continue to check back with Michigan's Children through our e-bulletin, social media pages and at our sponsored events. There's much that should and can be accomplished!

Matt Gillard is CEO and President of Michigan's Children.