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Ingham Academy Youth Pose the Questions at Candidate Forum for State House, Prosecutor and Sheriff's Office

Michigan's Children-Sponsored Event Helps Youths Voice Be Heard

LANSING, Mich. -- The Ingham County Circuit Court, Peckham, Inc., and Michigan's Children will host a special candidate forum on Oct. 18, 2016 when court-ordered youth enrolled at Ingham Academy ask challenging questions at an open forum featuring office-seekers for State House, Ingham County Prosecutor and Ingham County Sheriff.

Candidates seeking office to the county-wide positions and state House Districts 67, 68, 69 have been invited. The non-partisan forum takes place at 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at the Ingham County Family Center, home to Ingham Academy, at 1601 W. Holmes Road, in Lansing. Award-winning journalist Dustin Dwyer, of Michigan's Radio's State of Opportunity, will moderate.

"This event allows youth in the juvenile justice system to participate in the election process and have their issues heard and addressed by the candidates," said Scott LeRoy, Juvenile Program Director for the 30th Judicial Circuit Court – Family Division.

Youth ages 16-24 will pose questions they're selected of direct importance to their life experiences including topics such as foster care, the juvenile justice system, Zero Tolerance laws, gun violence and human trafficking.

Sarah Britton, Associate Director of Youth Services at Peckham, Inc., says the event promises to offer audience members and candidates the opportunity to hear youths describe the condition of their lives in raw terms.

"It's an exciting and important event because elected officials need to hear the concerns of today's youth," Britton said. "For the first time in these students' lives, they will be in the driver's seat, asking questions of officials that really matter to them."

The program will follow a standard format with all candidates given equal time to address the audience and respond to questions. While the event is being led by youths from the community, the audience will consist of people of all voting ages.

Michigan's Children CEO & President Matt Gillard added: "Kids deserve to be heard by their decision-makers and those setting policies that impact them in Lansing and Washington, D.C. Before we send any more leaders to Lansing and other key offices, the candidates need to hear what's on their minds."

This forum follows another candidate event organized by Michigan's Children and co-sponsored by The Children's Center in the Cass Corridor of Detroit. Michigan's Children is a Lansing-based, nonprofit, public policy organization working to improve policies that impact children, youth and families, especially those facing the most challenges.

Ingham Academy is a community-based, day treatment program and alternative high school for adjudicated youth from Ingham County who have been expelled or chronically suspended from their home high schools. Started in 2007, it is a collaboration of the Ingham County Circuit Court, Ingham Intermediate School District, Highfields and Peckham, Inc.

To participate in the event via Twitter, use the hashtag, [#youthled2K16](#)..

The Ingham Day Treatment Program is a highly structured program providing high risk youth who have been chronically suspended or expelled from school with an individualized learning environment that offers both educational and community supports. The Day Treatment Program focuses on providing youth the opportunity to receive the tools needed to excel academically while also gaining fundamental life skills to address antisocial thoughts and beliefs.

Youth who successfully complete the program have their high school diploma, one year of work experience and the life skills necessary to be productive members of society. The program is run in collaboration with the 30th Judicial Circuit Court – Family Division, the Ingham Intermediate School District, Highfields Inc and Peckham Inc. This program began September 4, 2007 with 20 slots for youth to attend. The program has grown to serve 80 youth, including the addition of a middle school program.

Peckham, Inc. is a nonprofit community rehabilitation organization that values quality, diversity and performance. Our mission is to provide a wide range of opportunities to maximize human potential for persons striving for independence and self-sufficiency. We embrace collaboration, effective resource management and innovative approaches to achieve world-class excellence.

Michigan's Children is the only statewide, multi-issue advocacy organization focused solely on public policy in the best interest of children from cradle to career and their families. Michigan's Children is eager to work with partners around the state on public issues affecting children, youth and families.