



January 2017

The Fiscal Year 2018 Budget Process in Michigan: Opportunities to Advocate for Children and Families

The budget is the most powerful expression of the state's priorities. It is during the budget process that decisions are made about how state revenues (taxes, fees, and other things that we pay as residents) are spent, and there are many competing interests that must be considered.

Because this process is unfamiliar to many, and moves very quickly, it has been difficult for parents, teachers, service providers and others to become involved. Decisions made about state resources impact everyone, but have particular impact on children and their families that already face challenges – children of color, from low-income families, and children served by the child welfare system. That is why it is critical that you get involved in budget advocacy.

What is the state's fiscal year? The next state budget that will be debated is the fiscal year 2017-2018 or FY2018 budget that runs 10/1/2017-9/30/2018.

What can I expect? The Governor will release his FY2018 budget recommendation in February. At that point, both the House of Representatives and the Senate will review his budget proposal. The Senate and House Appropriations Committees are divided into subcommittees that create recommendations on specific state department budgets. The subcommittee process begins in February and continues until the budget recommendations are finished. The subcommittees hold public hearings that include state department and fiscal agency staff, *as well as public testimony*. Once they approve their budget bills, these bills are then approved by the full appropriations committees, and then by the full House or Senate.

Differences between the House and Senate budget bills are ironed out in conference committees, which consist of a small number of subcommittee members from the House and Senate. Typically, by June, the budget bills are negotiated by the conference committees, approved by the full Legislature, and sent to the Governor for approval. At that point, the Governor can sign the budget bills into law, while having the power to veto any budget lines.

What can I do now? Talk to your legislators. If your legislators don't sit on appropriations committees, they can still champion your issues with their colleagues who do. It is also important to keep in close contact with legislative staff and other like-minded groups.

What should I do later? While talking to legislators throughout the budget season is important, ensuring they have a solid understanding of the programs that matter to you and the funding streams that support them is even more important. Communication before the budget season can ensure that legislators are prepared to be a voice for your programs and issues during this busy time.

The Michigan FY2018 Budget Timeline

- **February 2017:** Executive Budget released.
- **February – June 2017:** Legislative committee action underway. *Legislators need to hear about your concerns in the budget.*
- **May 2017:** Expected revenues finalized at revenue estimating conference. *The Governor needs to know about things that are or are not included in the Legislature-passed budget. Contact his office at www.michigan.gov/snyder/0,4668,7-277-57827---,00.html*
- **June – July 2017:** Governor signs the budget and can veto any line item.

Budget advocacy must happen year-round.

While talking to legislators during the budget season is important, making sure that they know the programs that matter to you and the funding streams that support them before the budget season can ensure that legislators are prepared to be a voice for your programs and issues during this busy time. Programs that help can't function without resources. Always talk about the money!

Find out who represents you and who sits on key committees impacting children, youth and families at www.michiganschildren.org/take-action/contact-policymakers

Sign-Up for Our E-Bulletins for updates and opportunities for action at www.michiganschildren.org