



## Action Begins on State Budget in Lansing

Both the Michigan Legislature and the United States Congress have April recesses for Spring Break and lawmakers will be back in their districts to hear from constituents on what they want to see prioritized in the budget process at both the state and federal level.

Appropriations sub-committees in both the Michigan House of Representatives and Senate began moving individual department budget bills for fiscal year 2018 (FY18) this week. As expected, both the House and Senate are looking for areas to reduce General Fund (GF) spending from Governor Snyder's proposed FY18 budget in an effort to justify an income tax cut that many Republican members of the Legislature are pushing for. The House is looking to reduce GF spending by \$200-\$300 million from the Governor's plan, while the Senate is expected to reduce GF by as much as \$500 million from Snyder's FY18 proposal. The House has moved all of their budget bills other than the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) out of their Appropriations sub-committees, while the Senate has a handful of budgets, including the DHHS bill, yet to move out of their Appropriations sub-committees.

Both the Michigan House and Senate have moved their Department of Education and School Aid budget bills out of their respective Appropriations sub-committees and they all contain some good news for children and families in Michigan. The Governor, Senate and House recommended increasing child care spending by nearly \$30 million dollars, in order to be able to draw down all of the federal funding possible for that program. They all recommended using that money to increase reimbursements for providers and continue to allow more families to access subsidies. The Senate and the House also followed the Governor's lead to significantly increase At-Risk funding in the School Aid budget. While the Governor effectively fully funded that program, the House and Senate reduced the amount of increase, but all three plans still contain a significant increase which will be extremely helpful to school districts throughout the state that are educating vulnerable children. We have some definite ideas about how they should be spending both of these increases and where more action is needed, which you can read in our recent [Budget Basics series](#), along with our priorities to support expansion of the Michigan Youth Opportunities Initiative for older foster kids and family literacy.

Meanwhile, in Washington, D.C., despite all of the focus on the failure of the health care reform and the Russia investigation, a federal budget battle is looming. Michigan's overall state budget is incredibly reliant on the maintenance of stable federal funding, especially in the area of programs that support children and families facing challenges. As I talked about last time but is worth highlighting here too, President Trump has presented a blueprint of his FY2018 budget

proposal to Congress calling for \$54 billion in cuts to non-defense spending to support a similar increase in military spending and construction of a wall on the Southern border. The budget also calls on Congress to cut fiscal year 2017 funding (which Congress must vote on by April 24<sup>th</sup> when the stop-gap measure ends) for non-defense discretionary programs by \$18 billion to partially offset proposed increases for defense and homeland security. One of many examples of the risks Michigan's program face is the complete elimination of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers Program, a highly evaluated, extremely effective program, included in the President's proposal. This program serves as Michigan's primary source of public funding for expanded learning programs, which provide critical after school and summer learning opportunities for thousands of school aged children in Michigan.

The Michigan Legislature will be home for the next two weeks, and our Congressional Delegation will be home for a couple of weeks in April as well, giving us lots of time and lots of opportunities to talk with them. Please reach out to your state legislators and let them know you expect them to support increases in child care, at-risk funding and support for foster kids. Let them know that they need to do more to support family literacy, expanded learning, integrated mental health services, *Early On* and other priorities important to your children, youth, families and communities. And now more than ever, it is imperative for constituents who care about kids to let their Congressional representatives know that, at an absolute minimum, they expect them to maintain programs and initiatives that have proven effective in supporting outcomes for children, youth and families as they make decisions on issues that impact budgets and resources for programs that support children and families. For more help in reaching out, see our [Prioritization in State and Federal Budgets](#) page.

*Matt Gillard is the President & CEO of Michigan's Children, the only statewide independent voice working to ensure that public policies are made in the best interest of children from cradle to career and their families.*