

Legislators Return to Work in Lansing and Washington, D.C.

In our state Capitol, lawmakers returned from a lengthy Summer recess to resume the legislative session. Majority party leaders in both the House of Representatives and the Senate announced their priority issues for the remainder of 2017, and what was most noticeable in both lists was an absence of issues related to children and families. This should be upsetting to people who care about children. This legislature should focus on a number of policy issues affecting children in the state, including rights for children in foster care and improvements to our child care system, to name a couple.

If we truly are committed to making Michigan a great place to be a child and raise a family, we need elected officials who prioritize the needs of children and families and work accordingly.

In our nation's Capitol, President Trump shocked the political world by agreeing to a deal with congressional Democrats to raise the debt ceiling and keep the federal government funded for another three months. Democrats hope the deal sets up a December showdown on the federal budget as Congress will have to enact a plan to keep the government funded for the remainder of the fiscal year, while Republicans believe they can push a debt ceiling debate to 2018.

At an absolute minimum, advocates for children should demand that Congress not cut funding to programs that support children and families as they pass a budget plan. Additionally, as efforts are already underway to raise the spending caps on Defense spending, the spending caps on non-Defense discretionary programs that support children and families should be raised at the same rate.

Finally, Congress is under the gun to extend some vital health service programs that are set to expire at the end of September if they do not act. Included in these and of particular importance to Michigan is the Maternal and Infant Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program. Michigan currently receives \$7.9 million annually through MIECHV and these funds are critical to Michigan's ability to provide evidence based home visiting programs to over 34,600 families every year. MIECHV has received strong bi-partisan support in Congress in recent years and there is an effort underway to increase funding gradually to double the program over five years. **Please contact your Congressional representatives and urge them to support re-authorization and increased funding for MIECHV so Michigan can serve more families with these proven successful programs.**