



Public policy  
in the best interest  
of children.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### Officers

**Kurt Stehlke, Chair**  
*Bank of America*

**Shaun Wilson, Vice Chair**  
*Truscott Rossman*

**Tony Stamas, Treasurer**  
*Small Business Association of Michigan*

**Kristen McDonald, Immediate Past Chair**  
*Greater Midland*

### Directors

**Yazeed Moore**  
*W.K. Kellogg Foundation*

**Terry Murphy**  
*Retired – Certified Public Accountant*

**Diana Wong**  
*Eastern Michigan University*

**John Ziraldo**  
*The Skillman Foundation*

**Matthew Gillard**  
*President and CEO*

Date: June 6, 2018

To: Members of the Senate Committee on Families, Seniors and Human Services

From: Matt Gillard, President & CEO, Michigan's Children  
[matt@michiganschildren.org](mailto:matt@michiganschildren.org) or (517) 485-3500

Re: House Bills 5121, 5122, 5123 – Children's Assurance of Quality Foster Care

First we applaud the efforts of this committee and bill sponsors, some of whom have been working on this legislation for quite some time.

While existing policy defining rights and responsibilities for children and youth experiencing care provides a thoughtful framework, there are limitations to the current system. The system relies solely on administrative support rather than Michigan law; the burden for following up a grievance rests on the child themselves; and the grievance procedure rests completely within the DHHS bureaucracy, whereas a system with more checks and balances would include an outside entity. We must protect these policies from shifts in state leadership, and we need an independent, consistent enforcement mechanism, trusted by those in the state's care, which requires a statutory base.

The concerns of young people in the foster care system and the caregivers in all settings who provide for them guide Michigan's Children's recommendations around the how we can improve child welfare in Michigan. Putting current policy and procedure into state statute through the current Children's Assurance of Quality Foster Care bill package is beneficial, and we can make the package yet more effective. Specifically:

1. "As soon as practicable" timeliness standard for services must be further defined, and require an annual independent review to identify and address delays and gaps in services around the state.
2. Complaints must be allowed from both children themselves and from their caregivers and others serving them and monitoring and follow up must lie with the system, rather than the child in the grievance procedure.
3. Some monitoring and follow up responsibility must be assigned outside of traditional paths within DHHS to ensure independent evaluation.
4. In order to maximize the impact of the bill, specific guidelines for reporting should be added, including a predetermined time limit to follow up complaints and making reporting available to independent evaluators.

Michigan's Children supports this proposed bill package because it begins to address issues within the foster care system identified consistently by young people and caregivers who have experienced it, but looks for recommended changes and additional efforts to improve policy and investment.