

Raising Our Voices

Influencing Public Policy on Our Own Behalf

2018 Michigan Teen Conference

June 21, 2018



*Public policy
in the best interest
of children.*

Who We Are

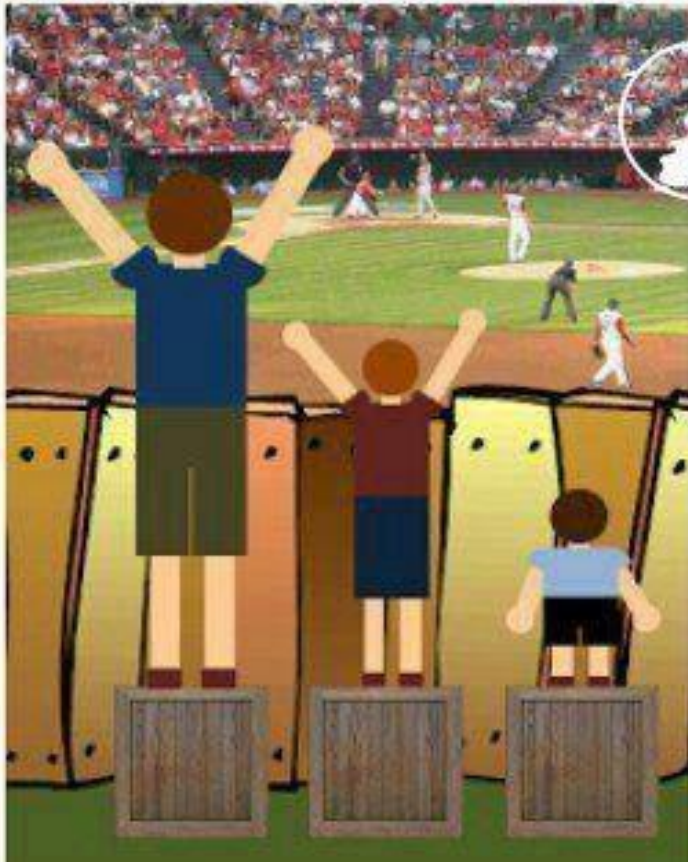
- Michigan's Children is a statewide, independent voice for children and their families.
- We want Michigan's public policies and programs to help children, youth and families access the opportunities they need to succeed.
- To make that happen, we work to ensure that policymakers prioritize the needs of children from cradle to career and their families who face the most challenges.

How We Work:

Knowing What Changes Public Policy

- **Understanding** Issues and Solutions
- Strategically **Communicating** that Information
- **Mobilizing Strategic Partners** and Engaging Communities Around Problems and Solutions
- **Advocate Directly** With Change Makers and Connect Others To Them

Equality



Equity



Policy In Context

- Growing child, youth and family poverty
- High unemployment, particularly for young adults
- Growing abuse and neglect
- Minimal movement in education outcomes
- Minimal movement in health outcomes
- Some public programs growing to meet needs
- Federal support more tenuous
- Others woefully lacking
- Poor outcomes across the board for kids involved with the foster care and juvenile justice systems

Why the Disconnect?

- Lots of competition for fewer dollars
- Ideology about the role of government
 - Polarization of the parties
 - Unprecedented at this moment
- Policymakers don't hear about issues of concern and recommendations from those who know the most

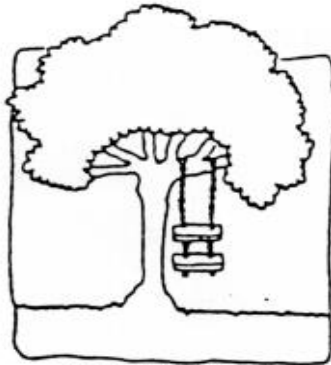
Raising Voices For Your Cause

- Moving concerns into ACTION
- Using influence for CHANGE
- Changing Attitudes and Behavior

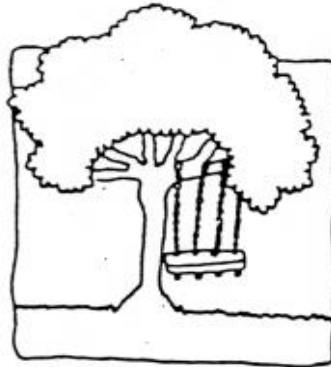
Why Get Involved/Why Advocacy

- You Can
 - You already have the skills you need
 - It doesn't take that many of us
- You Should
 - There are things we want changed
 - Democracy=Responsibility
 - Decision-makers REALLY need our help

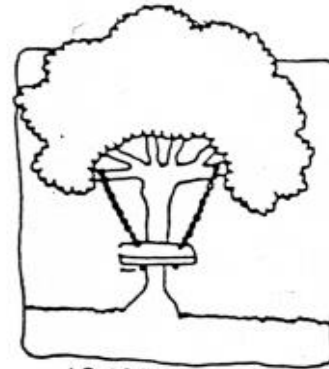
How a Bill Becomes Law



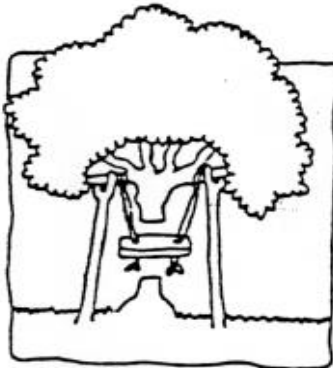
AS INTRODUCED



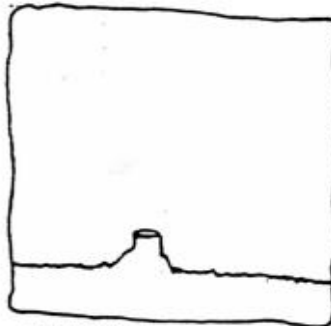
AS AMENDED IN
COMMITTEE



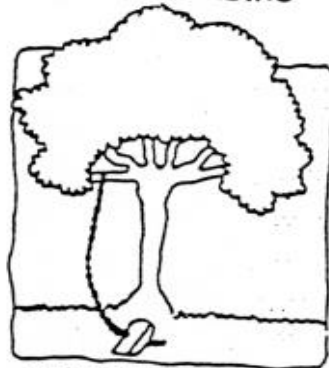
AS AMENDED ON
SECOND READING



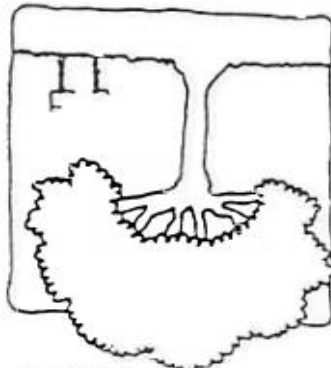
AS ENACTED



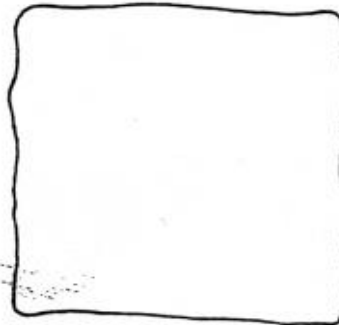
AS FUNDED BY JOINT
BUDGET COMMITTEE



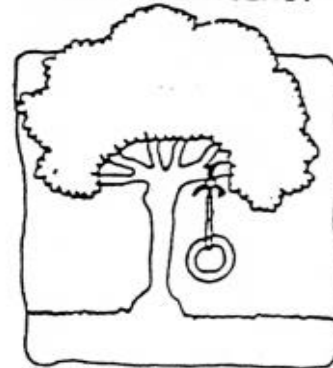
AS IMPLEMENTED BY
THE STATE AGENCY



AS REPORTED BY THE
MEDIA



AS UNDERSTOOD BY
THE PUBLIC



WHAT WAS ACTUALLY
NEEDED

How do we make change?

- **Get the attention of the people who can make the change you want**
- **Talk to Decision-Makers**
 - A concern that you have about your life
 - A concern that you have about their work
- **Talk to Other People**
 - About an issue
 - About policymaker's views or positions
 - About how to act

Building an Advocacy Strategy: Becoming a Stronger Voice for Your Concerns

- WHAT are the changes that matter
- Getting the attention of the people who can make the changes that we want
 - WHO can make those changes
 - HOW to get them to listen – what influences them
- Who and What Do We Know
- Who and What Do We Need

Policymakers Need To Know What We Know

- We Know the Problems
- We Know What Works
- We Know What Doesn't Work
- We Are Experts in Life and Work
- Solution as important as the problem

What Are the Changes That Matter?

- What do policymakers need to know about you, your families, your friends, your communities?
 - How can we get that information
- What do policymakers need to know about how programs work or don't work?
 - Maybe they work for some people but not others
 - Maybe they used to work but don't anymore
 - Maybe they are based on the wrong information about what matters

Know the Players

- Who can make the change
- What influences them
- Who Do We Know
- Who Do We Need

Advocacy= Bringing Influence to Bear

How Do We Influence Decision
Makers?

What Influences You?

Who/What Influences Decision Makers

- Friends
- Title or position
- Information
- Numbers
- Constituents
- Money

“When you need a friend, it’s too late to make one.”

Mark Twain

Who Do We Need?

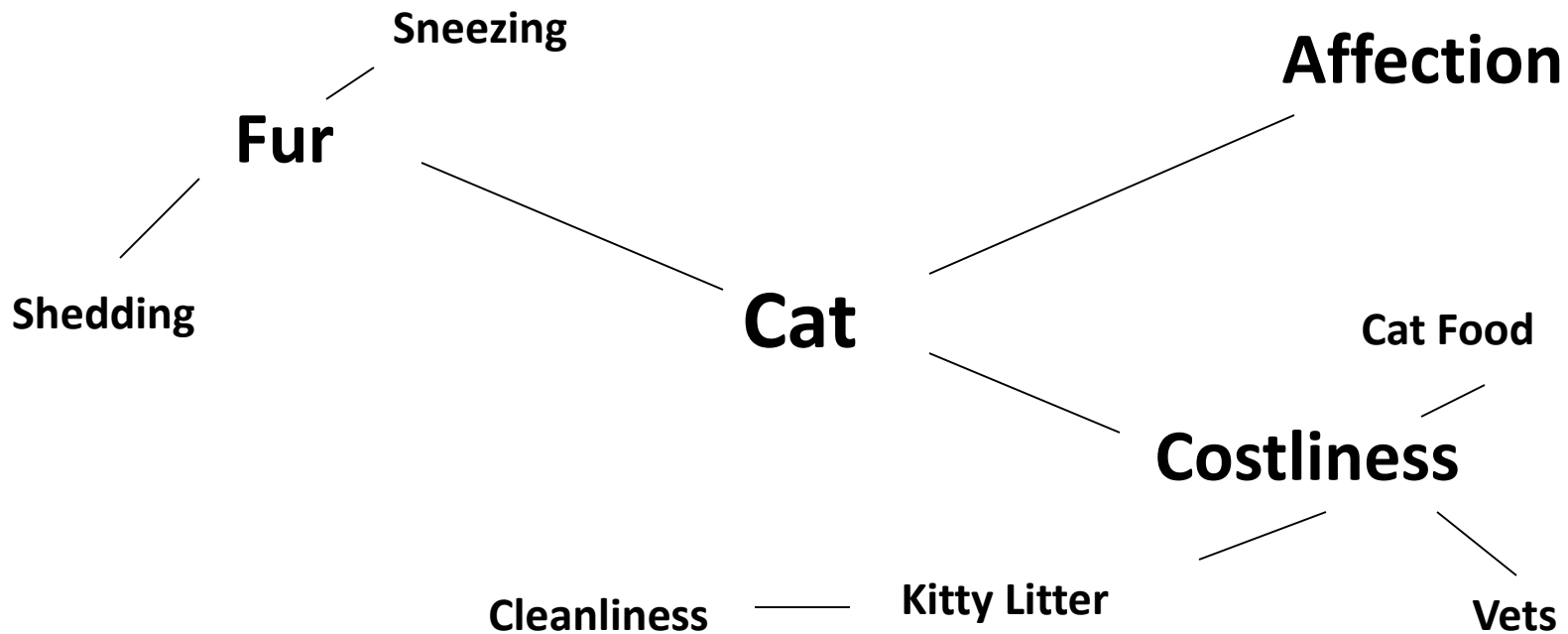
- People Who Know
- Relationships
- Information Partners
 - Researchers, Evaluators
- Titled Partners
 - Experts, Professionals
- Constituent Partners
 - Based on Geography and Experience

How Do We Get Them to Listen?

- We use mental shortcuts to make sense of the world
- Based on our life experiences, including the media
- We use “frames” to filter new information



Cat Frame



Why Do Frames Matter?

When the facts don't fit the frame, it is the FACTS that are rejected, not the frame.

How To Find Their Frame

- **Get to Know Them!**
- Simple Research
- Paying Attention
- TALK TO THEM

Four Critical Numbers

- 2500: Different piece of legislation to be considered EACH YEAR
- 10-20%: Voters who contact elected officials
- 12: Phone calls needed to get attention
- 5-20: Enough to start or stop a discussion

Civics 101

- The Clock is Always Ticking
- Always Looking for a Majority
- Two-party System – Majority in Power
- Bi-Cameral Legislature
- The Governor

How a Bill Becomes a Law

- Bills are introduced
- They are discussed by each chamber
 - Majority party controls the agenda
 - If both agree
- They are presented to the Governor
 - Veto power

How Do We Get Involved

- Generate an idea
- Help write it down
- Get it discussed by policymakers
- Talk to committee members
- Make sure your elected officials support it
- Convince the administration to support it

Democracy in Action

- Four tools for communication
 - Letters/e-mails – 1 page
 - Phone calls – 3 minutes
 - Coffee Hours – depends
 - Office Visits – 10-20 minutes

THEY CAN AND SHOULD VISIT YOU TOO!

 - Testimony – 3-5 minutes
- Be brief and focused, but be sure they hear you

Opportunities in 2018 and Beyond

- Implementation of Federal Foster Care/Education Laws
- Attention to Behavioral Health
- MDE Top Ten State Focus
 - Integrated Student Services
 - Shifts in School Discipline Policy
 - Attention to Dropout Prevention/Recovery
 - Competency Based Education
 - Champions on the State Board of Education
- Attention to Trauma Informed Practice
- More Than Anything Else = ELECTIONS

Preparing for Next Steps

- Is there anything we need to do before talking with policymakers?
- Who would be good partners to engage?
 - Do we already know them?
 - Do we need to get to know them?
- Who might be great messengers?
 - Us
 - Others?

What To Do Now

- Educate current policymakers about your concerns, effective programs addressing those concerns and other solutions
 - Some Will Be Re-elected
 - Some Have Legacy Interests
 - Some are Moving Into Other Positions of Influence
- Get Involved in the Election
 - Follow Candidates/Ask Them Questions
 - Participate in Youth-Led Candidate Forums
 - Vote and Encourage Others to Vote

What to Do Next

- Begin building a relationship with newly elected officials.
 - Sign-up for Your Legislators' Emails.
 - Attend a Coffee Hour
 - Participate in Lansing and Local Opportunities to Connect

What To Do Now And Continue to Do

- Stay connected to advocacy partners for updates – Fostering Success, NFYI, ACMH, MNYF, Michigan’s Children (sign-up for our e-bulletin), and others

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Giving Our Solutions The Best Chance

- What do we need to do before talking with policymakers?
- Who would be good partners to engage?
- Who might be the best messengers?

Always Keep the Door Open

- If they don't do what you want...
 - Can you blame them? Did they know what you know?
 - Express disappointment, but look for other possibilities
- If all else fails...
 - Don't get angry
 - Get a better person elected/appointed/hired