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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Dear News Editor/Assignment Editor:

The release of the U.S. Census Bureau's 2017 poverty data shows that Michigan's childhood poverty rate fell from 20.7% to 19.7% over the last year, down from a recession-high of 24.9% in 2012 but still significantly above pre-recession levels. Here is a statement from Michigan's Children's President & CEO Matt Gillard that helps put into perspective poverty in Michigan, its impact on children, youth, and families, and why the time is now to encourage state leaders to apply proven strategies to reduce childhood poverty:

"The data release this week should light a fire underneath elected leaders, candidates for public office, other policymakers and citizens and communities across our state," Matt Gillard said. "Our childhood poverty rate is moving in the right direction, but 450,000 of Michigan's children still face potentially compromised futures because of the economic limitations of their families."

"The challenges associated with poverty have been proven to impact a student's readiness for and ability to focus on learning, a child's likelihood of growing up healthy, and the stability of families," Gillard said. "We all benefit when children and youth have a stable home, safe and supportive communities, and access to the resources they need to grow."

Gillard said that Michigan's Children has again initiated its own Sandbox Party election campaign this season to bring constituents together with candidates for Congress, the state House and Senate. At youth-led and parent-led [forums](#) across the state, voters are being invited to discuss issues including the state's child welfare and foster care systems, literacy, mental health services, adult and alternative learning opportunities. The campaign highlights [five core issues](#) that contribute to the well-being of children: Child Care Matters, Families Matter, Foster Care Matters, Learning Matters and Mental Health Matters. All of these are threatened by economic instability.

"Our current and future elected officials can and must work together to protect children, youth, and families from the effects of poverty," Gillard said. "That starts with learning directly from kids and families themselves about the challenges to their educational and life success that economic insecurity brings, and using that knowledge as a base to find the most effective solutions that will help support and stabilize families."

Michigan's Children is 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. Our emphasis is on influencing public policies that close equity gaps and ensure that the children and youth who face the most challenges have the supports they need to succeed in school and life. By working to reform public policy, we improve the odds for all children, and support the work of those who provide services that help individual children overcome the odds.