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Immediate Release

News Release

Bay City Youths to Host Candidate Forum for Office-Seekers in 31st State Senate, 96th and 98th State House Races on Oct. 15 at Boys and Girls Club

LANSING, Mich. – In a departure from typical election-year forums, Michigan's Children will host a forum for candidates running in the **31st State Senate, 96th and 98th State House Districts on Monday, Oct. 15, 2018**. Bay City area youth from forum partners including the Boys and Girls Club of the Great Lakes Bay Region, the Bay City Public Schools' 21st Century After-School Program, the Bay-Arenac Intermediate School District, the Great Lakes Bay Regional Alliance, The ROCK Center for Youth Development in Midland, and the Michigan After-School Partnership will serve as panelists asking questions unique to their personal experiences.

The forum is scheduled for **3:30 pm – 5:30 pm** at the Boys and Girls Club of the Great Lakes Bay Region, 300 West Lafayette Avenue, Bay City, and will include discussion on the need for quality **before- and after-school programs and summer learning in Michigan**, among other topics. Candidates will be given equal time to answer questions.

"We are excited to be a partner in this statewide series of youth-led candidate forums," said Rich Van Tol, Supervisor, Bay-Arenac ISD and Out-of-School Time STEM Network Leader, Great Lakes Bay Regional Alliance. "It is important to be actively involved in advocating for before-and after-school programs. Moreover, it affords our youth a critical learning opportunity on how to engage with policymakers and offer their voice during the political process."

Matt Gillard, President and CEO of Michigan's Children, agreed that it's important for elected leaders and political hopefuls to hear from young people.

"Unfortunately, our state currently fails many of its youngest citizens," said Matt Gillard, President and CEO of Michigan's Children, the Lansing-based public policy and advocacy group. "Data in the annual Kids Count report show that in Bay County, 20% of students do not graduate from high school on time, and one third of students do not leave high school ready for college or a career. Elected officials must be able to listen to the youth and families in their community who want solutions to these issues."

The forum is the first in a series across the state with families and youth asking questions of political hopefuls in the upcoming November General Elections. Other upcoming forums in Lansing, Rochester, Fremont, Wyoming, Holland, Novi, Jackson and Kalamazoo will explore issues including the **state's child care system, juvenile justice, family stability** including economic struggles, **childhood trauma and toxic stress, adult and child literacy**, improvements in **K-12 education**, and **access to mental health services**. The intent is to help office-seekers develop a deeper understanding of the challenges facing today's children and families.

"Michigan ranks at or near the bottom third of states in a range of child well-being indicators, from low reading and math test scores to rising abuse and neglect rates to the sixth-highest rate of children living in high-poverty neighborhoods in the country," said Gillard. "For this to turn around, we desperately need informed office-

seekers to hear from the kids and families they want to serve and to understand there are strong policy solutions in each of these areas.”

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.



The Bay City Public Schools’ 21st Century After-School Program provides students with academic support, math and homework tutoring, and academic enrichment. The Afterschool Program also provides students with technology, art, cooking and life skills, team sport programs, and field trips. During the summer, the 21st Century Afterschool Program, provides students with a free Summer Program that promotes academic achievement over the summer months.



BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS
OF THE GREAT LAKES BAY REGION

The Boys and Girls Club of the Great Lakes Region has a mission to “inspire and enable all young people, especially those who need us most, to reach their full potential as productive, responsible, and caring citizen.” The Boys and

Girls club provides a safe place for students after school by providing a fun environment where they can build character and develop life skills.



Great Lakes Bay Regional Alliance is a four county alliance working to build regional strength to encourage, support, and celebrate regional collaborative and initiatives that improve the Great Lakes Bay Region to improve the future of the individual and the community.



The ROCK Center for Youth Development is a teen-focused organization that helps youth succeed and thrive. We are an independent, inclusive, non-profit who provides developmental education, after school programs, and community-based activities for middle and high school students. Our goal is to build tangible life skills, instill confidence and sense of belonging, and encourages healthy life choices and relationships in our teens.



The Michigan After-School Partnership (MASP) is a statewide afterschool network focused on actively engaging and educating key decision makers in support of effective school and community based afterschool and summer programs that provide opportunities so that all students reach their full potential and are prepared for the jobs of tomorrow.