



*Public policy
in the best interest
of children*

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Immediate Release

News Release

Youth and Families from Foster Care Lead Candidate Forum in 12th and 13th State Senate, and 40th, 41st & 45th State House Races on Oct. 18 at Oakland University

Rochester, Mich. – In a departure from typical election-year forums, Michigan's Children will host a forum for candidates running in the 12th and 13th State Senate Districts, and the 40th, 41st and 45th State House districts on **Thursday October 18, 2018** with a unique theme. Youth and families with experience in the foster care system are helping to organize the event and will serve as questioners. Also invited are candidates for Governor and U.S. Senate.

The non-partisan forum is scheduled for **7:00 pm – 9:00 pm** at **Oakland University, 318 Meadow Brook Road, Rochester**. Candidates will be given equal time to answer questions.

A dozen youth, young adults and foster parents will participate, representing partnering agencies - The New Foster Care, Fostering Success Michigan, Oakland University, Wayne State University, Judson Center, Bethany Christian Services, and Vista Marie.

"Youth voice is immensely important in foster care and our young people are very excited for the opportunity to be heard and share the experiences and challenges they've gone through," said Khadija Walker- Fobbs, Executive Director of the New Foster Care. "This should not be an invisible population. They are excited to be part of the process to help fix some of the things that need to be changed, to make it better for the young people coming up from behind in this system."

Walker-Fobbs said it is equally important to put foster care – which encompasses 13,000 children and young adults in Michigan – in the forefront of issues facing elected officials because of the cross-section of many public and private areas and systems it touches – the state Department of Health and Human Services, education, the juvenile justice system, private agencies, poverty, and barriers in transportation.

"They're not in foster care because they've done anything wrong. They're in foster care because of unfortunate situations. And in foster care they're wards of the state which means we all have a responsibility to them."

The forum is one in a series sponsored by Michigan's Children, a statewide advocacy and public policy organization, and 25 other nonprofits and agencies. Other forums in Bay City, Lansing, Fremont, Wyoming, Holland, Novi, Jackson and Kalamazoo will explore and compare candidates' positions on the shortcomings of 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.

“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 reports shows us that 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.

“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 New
foster care

TNFC exists to increase awareness and make a measurable impact on the foster care system through collaboration and connection. TNFC works with faith-based organizations and the community to take immediate action through filing gaps, developing permanent relationships and creating positive changes in the foster care system.



**Fostering
Success
Michigan**

Fostering Success Michigan is a statewide initiative that aims to increase access and success in higher education and post-college careers for students with experience in foster care.



**MICHIGAN FEDERATION
FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

The mission of the Michigan Federation for Children and Families is to unite private, nonprofit human service providers, advocates, customers, individuals and funders to influence public policy in support of children, families and individuals' reaching their full potential; identify, develop and implement efficient and effective services to Michigan's most vulnerable children and families; and support and enhance the ability of Michigan's private, nonprofit agencies to provide human services.

Vista Maria was founded as an orphanage in 1883 by the Sisters of the Good Shepherd. The Sisters’ legacy of rescuing and restoring women and children provides the foundation for the agency’s mission today: to deliver innovative care, support, treatment and education so that vulnerable youth heal, believe in their worth and build the skills needed to succeed.



BETHANY.
CHRISTIAN SERVICES

Bethany Christian Services is a global nonprofit organization that brings families together and keeps families together. Strengthening families for the well-being of children is our top priority. Our services include adoption, foster care, and pregnancy counseling. We also provide counseling to families, assist refugees and immigrants resettling in the U.S., and partner with several international countries to help keep families together.



Judson Center

Helping those in need succeed

Judson Center is a non-profit human service agency that provides compassionate, comprehensive services to children and families throughout southeast Michigan. We have been changing fates and restoring childhoods for children who have been abused and neglected, and others who are challenged by developmental disabilities, severe emotional impairments and autism spectrum disorder.

Oakland University is a public university located in the cities of Auburn Hills and Rochester Hills, Michigan, United States. Situated on a 1,400-acre campus, it was co-founded by Matilda Dodge Wilson and Alfred Wilson after meeting with John A. Hannah.



**WAYNE STATE
UNIVERSITY**

Wayne State University is a public research university located in Detroit, Michigan. Founded in 1868, WSU consists of 13 schools and colleges offering nearly 350 programs for more than 27,000 graduate and undergraduate students.