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Immediate Release

News Release

Michigan's Children, State Advocates Launch Series of Youth- and Parent-Led Candidate Forums to Focus on Issues that Matter Most to Kids and Families

LANSING, Mich. – Michigan's Children, teaming up with a variety other child and family advocates across the state, have launched a series of youth- and family-led candidate forums to bring awareness to critical issues that aren't typically raised on the campaign trail. Instead of talk about bad roads, high auto insurance rates, or replacing Line 5, these forums will focus on improving outcomes for kids and their families.

The first forum, scheduled in Bay City on October 15, 2018, will focus on the need for quality **before- and after-school programs and summer learning in Michigan**. Other upcoming forums 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 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," he added.

Insights gained from the youth- and family-led forums will be used to inform policy initiatives in a new **Michigan's Children Playbook** for distribution to elected officials after the state's General Elections. The Playbook will outline Michigan's Children's five policy priorities, detailing problem areas and their solutions, including ways that new investments, regulations and resources can lead to viable remedies. Those priority issue areas are: child care, family supports, foster care, education, and mental health.

[Each forum](#) will follow a standard two-hour format in which candidates are given equal time to answer questions before a local audience. A listing of those forums follows.

Monday, Oct. 15, 3:30 pm - 5:30 pm

Location: Boys and Girls Club of the Great Lakes Bay Region, 300 Lafayette Ave., Bay City. Partners: Bay-Arenac ISD, the Bay City Public Schools' 21st Century After-School Program, Boys and Girls Club of the Great Lakes Region, Great Lakes Bay Regional Alliance, the ROCK Center for Youth Development in Midland, and

the Michigan After-School Partnership welcome candidates in the 31st State Senate, 96th State House and 98th State House districts.

Tuesday, October 16, 4:00 pm – 5:30 pm

Location: Lansing Community College Michigan Room 1128, Gannon Building Conference Center, 411 N. Grand Avenue, Lansing. Partners: Peckham Inc., LCC's Fostering Stars Program, Ingham Academy, Ingham County Circuit Court, and Fostering Success Michigan welcome candidates in the 8th Congressional, 23rd State Senate, 24th State Senate, 68th State House districts.

Thursday, October 18, 7:00 pm – 9:00 pm

Location: Oakland University, 318 Meadow Brook Rd, Rochester. Partners: The New Foster Care, Fostering Success Michigan, Oakland University, Wayne State University, Judson Center, Bethany Christian Services, and Vista Maria welcome candidates in the 12th State Senate, 13th State Senate, 40th State House, 41st State House, and 45th State House districts. *Candidates for Governor and U.S. Senate have also been invited to this forum.*

Friday, October 19, 9:30 a.m. – 11:00 am

Location: Dogwood Center for the Performing Arts, 4734 S Campus Ct, Fremont, MI. Partners: Fremont Area Community Foundation Youth Advisory Council, Newaygo High School, Project Focus, a True North Community Services initiative, and the Michigan After-School Partnership welcome candidates for the 34th State Senate and 100th State House districts.

Monday, October 22nd, 9:30 am – 11:00 am

Location: Wyoming Community Education, 3600 Byron Center Ave., Wyoming. Partners: Kent ISD and the Michigan Association of Community and Adult Education (MACAE) welcome candidates in the 28th State Senate, 29th State Senate, 75th State House, 76th State House, and 77th State House districts.

Tuesday, October 23rd, 5:30 pm – 7:00 pm

Location: Novi Middle School Auditorium, 49000 W 11 Mile Rd, Novi. Partners: Novi Community Education and the Michigan Association of Community and Adult Education (MACAE) welcome candidates in the 11th Congressional District, 11th State Senate, 15th State Senate, the 38th State House, and 39th State House districts.

Wednesday, October 24th, 5:30 pm – 7:00 pm

Location: Lenawee Intermediate School District Tech Center, 1372 N. Main St. Adrian. Partners: Michigan Works Southeast and the Michigan Association of Community and Adult Education (MACAE) welcome candidates in the 7th Congressional District, 17th State Senate, 57th and 65th State House districts.

Tuesday, October 30th, 10:00 – 11:30 am

Location: Holland MidTown Center, 96 W 15th St, Holland. Partners: Zeeland/Holland Adult Education, and the Michigan Association of Community and Adult Education (MACAE) welcome candidates in the 30th State Senate and 90th State House districts.

**This opportunity is a Candidate Conversation, rather than a Candidate Forum. It is structured as a much less formal way for candidates to talk with students in the program.*

Monday, October 29th, 6:30 pm – 8:30 pm

Location: Kirsch Auditorium at the Fetzer Center, WMU, 2251 Business Court. Kalamazoo. Partners: ASK Family Services, the Kalamazoo Youth Development Network welcome candidates in the 20th State Senate, 60th State House, and the 61st State House districts.

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.