

Proven Plays for Youth in Transition

The economic success of Michigan depends on getting all Michigan children ready for post-secondary education, work, and life, but too many young people aren't succeeding through traditional high school graduation routes, and many need more time or different paths to reach a diploma. In addition, many young people, including youth who have spent time in foster care or the juvenile justice system, or those who have been homeless, face barriers to graduation that education alone cannot remove. Maintaining support through young adulthood is even more critical for young people facing these kinds of challenges, and services should be available regardless of age or geography, with access based instead on skill building and successful outcomes.

Providing Stability

Ensuring that young people who shoulder significant burdens have some stability in their lives and education, coupled with opportunities to get ahead, will result in more supportive relationships, fewer criminal justice records and better educational, career and family outcomes.

- X** **Expand the Michigan EITC for young people who have experienced foster care** by lowering the minimum age to 16 and basing the credit on what would be available through the federal and state EITC combined if the current age threshold of 25 was met.
- X** **Fully fund programs and coordinated services through the Michigan Youth Opportunities Initiative** to put youth in foster care, who may take longer to get through high school and often have fewer home supports in their transition, on a path towards life success.
- X** **Develop interagency agreements between education and child welfare** to ensure the quick transfer of information when a student in foster care moves, better record of accumulated credits, and better communication about any special needs.
- X** **Eliminate barriers to acquiring a state ID or driver's license for youth in transition by coordinating DHHS and Secretary of State efforts.**
- X** **Improve legal representation for children, youth and caregivers in the foster care system by Legal Guardians Ad Litem (LGALs)** by utilizing available federal match and expanding state funding, as well as increasing training and documentation requirements for courts.
- X** **Expand Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) representation for older youth in foster care by piloting the National CASA Fostering Futures initiative**, which targets transitioning youth, in at least three localities. Use this pilot to determine appropriate ways to layer support through this initiative and MYOI.

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- X** **Reintroduce, pass, and fund the Raise the Age bills**, which would allow prosecutors to choose to enroll 17-year-old offenders into the juvenile justice system with community-based rehabilitative services that are proven to reduce recidivism rates.
- X** **Continue and expand state support for the organizations within the Network for Youth and Families** who serve homeless young people, including youth who have experienced foster care, and youth living with a disability.

Preparing for Postsecondary Training and Careers

It is universally accepted that some postsecondary training is essential to access family-supporting jobs. Not surprisingly, postsecondary paths are even less accessible to young people who have struggled through high school, and continue to need financial and other support to succeed.

- X** **Direct state funds towards proven models of integrating student services at school, which could be facilitated through interagency funding mechanisms.** Coordinating academic, health, and other services between schools, service providers, parents, and community partners for students can remove barriers to learning that one system alone can't solve.
- X** **Preserve and expand state support for competency-based education and flexible paths to graduation** which provide flexible scheduling, smaller classes, alternative credit bearing options, and post-secondary pathways to students who may struggle to achieve and graduate due to their personal circumstances.
- X** **Improve collaboration between school districts and Michigan Rehabilitation Services** to ensure the completion of Individualized Education Plans for older high school students and the appropriate transfer of student records to post-secondary providers.
- X** **Expand state support for, and reform eligibility for, the Fostering Futures Scholarship**, which provides college tuition, room, and board, and supplies to youth who spent time in foster care. This scholarship needs to more flexibly layer onto other assistance programs and could be expanded to serve more young people in need.
- X** **Preserve and expand state support for adult education programs** that provide opportunities for young adults and parents to build literacy skills, earn a GED, and prepare for a career, improving workforce participation and family literacy rates.