

# Opinion | Please hold applause until state budget supports most vulnerable

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 [Guest Commentary](#)



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If you're within earshot of the closed office doors in and around the state Capitol building, you'll hear the faint roar of applause and self-congratulations from many legislators who have just now reached an agreement on the 2020 state budget.

The more appropriate response for the occasion, however, is a moment of silence – especially after several attempts to reach supplemental agreements have yielded little to no progress in the protection of our state’s most vulnerable youth and families.

In October, following the governor’s vetoes and administrative transfers, Michigan’s Children, with the mobilization of our network of advocates across the state, sought to improve the odds of Michigan youth facing significant barriers, by pushing to restore funding programs that addresses significant needs. Decision-makers told us they would fight for a supplemental budget that restores the most urgently needed programs.

But as it stands after months of square dancing, our state budget fails to highlight the necessary commitment needed to support struggling learners, our most challenged youth, and families impacted by the child welfare system. Programs that are proven to improve their life outcomes are not partisan, nor are they pork spending; they should be our priorities because they ultimately benefit all of us.

Michigan is sitting on hundreds of millions of dollars that were vetoed from the current budget and could be used to meet the critical needs of our state’s children, youth and families.

The Northeast Michigan Community Service Agency’s School Success Partnership, which places community-based advocates in schools to help students and their families find support to meet their basic needs and succeed in school, lost \$525,000 from its budget and has had to lay off staff, leaving entire school buildings of students, many of whom are experiencing homelessness, without access to critical wraparound supports during the coldest time of the school year. Another \$600,000 was vetoed to support wrap-around services during afterschool and summer.

One of the specific transfers made was to remove funding for the Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA). The \$500,000 in the legislatively-passed budget would have ensured access to this critical resource for children and youth in the foster care system in Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties, as well as beginning to target services to older youth transitioning out of foster care.

Other notable cuts in funding to vital programs and initiatives included, but not limited to: \$250,000 for the Adoptive Family Support Network, allowing their operations in support of adoptive, foster, kin and birth parents to continue; \$500,000 to pilot a social-emotional learning program in at least five districts; and \$800,000 increase for Runaway and Homeless Youth service providers have not yet been restored.

But keep in mind, these programs still have a chance.

We know there is interest from some policymakers to pass another supplemental budget in January to restore more of the vetoed programs and those who found their funding transferred.

Nonetheless, state legislators are set to face an uphill battle with the predicament of both reaching a supplemental budget that is inclusive of these programs for fiscal year 2020, while engaging in talks of configuring the state budget for fiscal year 2021.

We remain optimistic about the inclusion of vital programming moving forward, but please hold the applause until our state budget fully reflects our intent to secure brighter futures for all Michiganders, especially the most vulnerable among us.