

February, 2020

## **Successful Youth Transitions in the Michigan State Budget: Runaway and Homeless Youth**

The economic success of Michigan depends on getting all Michigan children ready for post-secondary education, work, and life. Over 13,000 youth in grades eight and above reported being homeless in Michigan in 2018-2019, an experience that makes traditional adult transition pathways difficult, resulting in a four-year high school graduation rate of 55% in 2018. Youth with unique vulnerabilities, including sexual or physical abuse, parental incarceration, mental health issues, or substance use, and poverty, tend to experience homelessness. Fewer than 60% of young adults who have experienced foster care report having stable housing. Additionally, 60% of child sex trafficking survivors have experienced foster care.

Michigan's network of agencies that provide runaway and homeless youth with crisis and transition services are effective. 95% of youth discharged from emergency shelters are reunified with their families, and 88% are actively enrolled in education, yet recent years have overtaxed their service capacity due to increased severity of needs experienced by youth, and some program closures due to lack of funds have left multiple Michigan counties with a gap in service access for homeless and runaway youth. As a result, the percentage of runaway and homeless youth receiving services in Michigan is declining.

Two years ago, Michigan provided a modest increase of \$500,000 for the first time since 2001. A further increase in last year's legislatively-passed budget of \$300,000, however, was line-item vetoed. These increases, while significant, are not enough to bring back closed programs or meet the increased needs of youth. They must serve as the first step for re-building a network of support for youth and families.

**Current Situation: The Governor's budget recommendation includes no increase for runaway and homeless youth services, and does not restore the Governor's line-item veto.**

### Recommendations

- **Urge House and Senate leaders to increase state funding in the MDHHS budget for runaway and homeless youth programs, by \$3 million, including restoring the line-item veto, as a first step towards rebuilding service access statewide.**