



Public policy in the best interest of children

Date: March 4, 2020
To: Michigan House School Aid Appropriations Subcommittee
From: Matt Gillard, President & CEO
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RE: Digital Credentialing

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding the digital badging pilot. Michigan's Children is an independent nonprofit dedicated to advocating for public policies in the best interests of children and families, from cradle to career, especially those who face significant challenges. We determine our priorities based on the lived experiences of children, youth, families, and those who serve them, as well as research, data, and policy analysis. During our 2018 youth-led candidate forums, our candidates fielded questions from middle- and high-school aged youth as well as adult education students which touched on the need to prioritize connecting young people with a number of skill-building and expanded learning opportunities.

For young people who find themselves struggling to graduate in four years due to challenging life circumstances, including students experiencing poverty, foster care, homelessness, or juvenile justice, expanded learning opportunities through afterschool and summer learning programs take on critical importance in helping them build concrete skills, from teamwork to specific professional skills, while connecting them with college and career opportunities. Unfortunately, many of the valuable skills and experiences young people gain in these programs go unrecognized as evidence of their learning because they are not found on a transcript.

The IMS Global Digital Credentialing project will help recognize all kinds of learning, including technology skills, teamwork skills, and more, on the transcripts of students. The work being done to make these connections will help increase the employability of Michigan's growing workforce and help employers identify specific applicant skills. We believe that funding for this pilot is quite appropriate given the system-wide benefits, and potential benefits for educational equity, that this project will incur.

We thank you for the opportunity to share our testimony with your committee, and look forward to continuing to work with our elected officials to make public policy decisions in the best interests of children, youth, and families.

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