



May 8, 2020

Dear Sen. Stabenow:

Over the past several weeks, we, Michigan's Children, have relayed a wide range of information, policy recommendations and constituent feedback regarding issues impacting Michigan children, youth and families during this difficult time. We greatly appreciate your consideration. We have identified specific issues that reflect your positions, expertise, and communications we've had with your staff, and we would like to further discuss your willingness and ability to champion these priorities on behalf of our state's most vulnerable children, youth and families in future federal COVID response legislation:

Support for Child Welfare and Foster Care Increased Costs

With increased family stress exacerbated by high unemployment, close proximity and a lack of service access for children and youth with disabilities, delays or mental and physical health needs, it is unlikely that funding available will be enough to fully support families, including formal and informal relative caregivers, foster and adoptive parents as well as struggling birth families. A comprehensive Dear Colleague letter was circulated recently, and we've attached it here. The range of supports mentioned are all critical:

- Support for abuse and neglect prevention programs through CAPTA Title II Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CB-CAP) Grants.
- Increased access to Kinship Navigator programs for high-risk caregivers
- Further support to stabilize families through Title IV-B Part 2.
- Improved child welfare agency functions through CAPTA Title I.
- Reinforce court functions to continue critical hearings, family reunification activities and other critical supports through the Court Improvement Program.
- Support older youth in and leaving foster care by allowing states to draw down Title IV-E resources through age 21 and by increasing Chafee funding, removing some individual spending caps and extending eligibility.

Improve access to WIC and WIC-allowable purchases

Unlike SNAP benefits, pregnant women and families with young children cannot use their WIC for curbside pickup, online ordering, or delivery. They have to be present inside the building to use WIC benefits. Many WIC clinics are closed, and WIC limits families to certain brands of products that they may or may not be able to access in their own grocery stores.

Expand Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) through the summer

This program has successfully connected families with needed food, and should not end at the end of the typical school year. Funding could be combined with other summer feeding programs that typically have low uptick and will have even less ability to provide food in the current crisis.

Direct Financial Supports for State and Local Governments

Michigan, like other states, is facing significant revenue challenges due to this crisis. Critical public services, and supports for those services that go to nonprofits and other agencies can't continue without strong state and local governments to support them.

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Thank you for your service for the children, youth, and families of Michigan, we look forward to working together.

Regards,

Matt Gillard
President & CEO