

Michigan's Children

Public policy in the best interest of children

June 9, 2020

To: Governor Gretchen Whitmer; Speaker Lee Chatfield; Majority Leader Mike Shirkey; Minority Leader Christine Grieg; Senate Minority Leader Jim Ananich; Senate Appropriations Chair Jim Stamas; Senate Appropriations Minority Chair Curtis Hertel; House Appropriations Chair Shane Hernandez; House Appropriations Minority Chair Jon Hoadley

From: Matt Gillard, President and CEO, Michigan's Children

Re: Eviction Impact on Struggling Youth and Families

As Michigan is opening up the economy and working through plans for making sure that employers, service providers and other workers remain safe, we ask that you extend the current deadline for the pandemic eviction moratorium. Removing that moratorium could have extremely negative impacts on the health and well-being of children, youth, and families who faced significant life challenges that have only been exacerbated over the last few months. We support actions taken to extend the eviction moratorium and urge you to consider ensure additional long-term supports for struggling households.

An eviction of a young person or their family is almost always a public policy failure with traumatic consequences for those who experience it. Evictions may occur when a renter cannot afford rent, or if they cannot access some other support like mental health or substance use care or child care that is ultimately putting them at risk of losing their housing. An eviction is always a traumatic event, but especially at this moment, evictions would do far more harm than good for youth and families in our state, as well as for public health, safety, and economic outcomes. Furthermore, in this moment of unprecedented outcry to reimagine our systems of public health, well-being, and safety, we recognize that changing people's experience of law enforcement begins with addressing the root causes of those different encounters, and that many people's experiences with law enforcement involves an eviction.

When COVID-19 hit, most families had little to no money in emergency savings. While important steps were taken to help families find resources and stay at home, including the recent court rules prioritizing certain cases, we know that many youth and families struggled to receive financial assistance and will likely continue to struggle to secure resources for their families in a depressed economic environment, with the underemployed and young people with limited work having the most need and receiving the fewest resources. Many families remain at risk for eviction, some at even greater risk than before.

Evictions especially expose foster families, adoptive families, grandparents, aunts, and uncles across the state, who are navigating the effects of past experiences of trauma from toxic stress, to extreme uncertainty of managing a household and making life decisions when "home" might not be there soon. Many have struggled to keep up with rent. This uncertainty will compound the feelings of isolation among the adults and children and youth in their homes and introduce further strain into adult-child relationships. A surge in evictions would also threaten the state's plans to reunify many children currently experiencing foster care with their parents due to the ways an eviction can turn someone's life upside down, and could be a trigger that leads to a child's removal from their family and entry into child welfare. Furthermore, many caregivers would be considered medically compromised to the virus.

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