

Michigan's Children

Public policy in the best interest of children

Date: July 30, 2020
To: Michigan's Congressional Delegation
From: Matt Gillard, President & CEO
RE: matt@michiganschildren.org or (517) 485-3500
RE: Last-Minute Priorities for July COVID Action

Michigan's Children is an independent organization committed to uplifting the needs of all of our state's children, youth, and families, especially those who shoulder significant burdens, in policy conversations. With COVID negotiations ongoing, you have a historic opportunity to push for investments that fully meet the increased needs facing Michigan's children, youth, and families due to COVID and change their odds. We write to highlight priorities with growing support, and to most vigorously urge you to prioritize additional specific investments for this that still need champions.

Michigan's families are experiencing continued employment loss, stress, and upcoming "cliffs" in resource stability, and critical existing state and local programs and services that Michiganders utilize are at risk of cuts due to budget pressures. For these reasons, we fiercely support the prioritization of state and local aid, as well as long-term income, nutrition, and housing aid in recognition of the increased instability that families are experiencing in these areas. Michigan's delegation, however, cannot stop there. We need you to prioritize these four issues in your conversations with leadership in the coming days:

Invest in the most vulnerable families: \$1 billion for Abuse & Neglect Prevention, \$500 million for Child Protective Services, \$100 million for Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECH-V), \$50 million for older youth in care; and specific investment to support Kinship families.

Families need support to avoid and successfully intervene with childhood traumas that impact success and failure through children's lifetimes. The pandemic crisis has not only caused additional trauma for children, youth and families, it has also created extraordinary stress across Michigan's families. Like other systems, service gaps have been exposed, and funding levels discussed so far are far below what is necessary and one of the most critical parts of the system, relatives and other kin who care for children and youth when their parents can't, need specific resource support that is so far lacking.

Invest in parent skill building: \$1 billion for Adult Education

Michigan will need to rely on our young adults and parents to help restart our economy. It is imperative that we provide them with the tools and skills necessary to thrive. Distance learning resources such as technology access, Wi-Fi hotspots and devices will be important to match the educational and career outcomes we have planned as a state. The pandemic has created additional risk in being able to expand geographic service gaps for the lowest skilled adults just when the need for these services will most certainly expand. We need technology access, affordable technology tools and funding to expand educational and career attainment to the most vulnerable in our state.

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Invest in targeted learning support: \$12 billion for special education incl. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), incl. \$11 billion for K-12 (Part B), \$500 million for infants/toddlers (Part C), and \$400 million for preschool (Sec 619); \$6.2 billion for out-of- school learning incl. 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21CCLC)

It's starting to look like Michigan students will spend a lot of time "out of school" during the 20-21 school year. We already know that learning gaps have likely increased during the pandemic, and with private "pandemic pods" forming that could exacerbate inequity, we must ensure equitable "out-of-school" learning opportunities for all students to supplement either in-person or virtual public school education. 21st Century Community Learning Center funding is the only dedicated government funding source for school-age care in Michigan. It's designed to maximize school and community resources to help working parents making low incomes, and least able to work from home.

Invest in child care: \$50 billion for Child Care & Development Block Grant (CCDBG)

COVID has clearly demonstrated how important child care is to our nation's economy and has also shown light on the tremendous inequities that are inherent in our current child care system. Low and moderate income working families are now faced with difficult child care choices as they are forced to return to work in order to support their families. Significant increased federal investment in the CCDBG is absolutely essential to ensure that all Michigan families have the support they need to provide quality care for their children while they are at work.

To continue this conversation and work towards framing the solutions to these issues, please reach out to us to connect. Thank you in advance for your consideration in these matters that we know will serve the best interests of our state's most vulnerable children, youth and families. We look forward to working with you to make public policy decisions in the best interests of children, youth, and families at this important moment.