



Public policy in the best interest of children

To: United States Representative Bill Huizenga, Michigan House District 2
From: Matthew Gillard, President & CEO, Re: Michigan's Children
Re: Immediate Priorities for Supporting Michigan's Children, Youth, and Families
Date: Friday, January 22, 2021

Dear Representative Huizenga,

Despite all of the challenges the last year presented, one of the many outcomes we witnessed in 2020 was Congress' resolve to unite together to serve many of the public's needs through directing aid to individuals, states, and key systems and services that maintain the well-being of children, youth, and families. Now, more than ever, Michigan needs Congress to forge ahead and find solutions to the needs of our state's most vulnerable children, youth and families that went either insufficiently addressed by Congress last year or which have grown more acute over time. We write in strong support of the President's goal for immediate additional stimulus and urge you to champion immediate action as well that will prioritize:

Programs and Services that Promote Well-Being and Skill-Building

Michigan's families have fought to maintain stability, and kids, youth, and parents alike have worked to learn and build skills that will serve their communities well in our recovery. Congress last year failed to prioritize sufficient support for child care access, community-based child abuse and neglect prevention efforts, and child welfare services, which all will be necessary in the years to come as families navigate the effects of toxic stress they have experienced and seek new or continued work and learning opportunities. Likewise, Congress failed to prioritize the different needs of learners, failing to fully fund IDEA and adult education and failing to dedicate increased in-school support or out-of-school learning opportunities for traditionally underserved student subgroups.

Relief for Children, Youth, and Families

For Michigan's children, youth, and families, income, housing, health care, and nutrition have grown more insecure. Last year, Congress passed insufficient housing, nutrition, physical and mental health, and income support for the 2021 year. Necessary, immediate federal relief must include resources that will stabilize and strengthen families and help children and youth thrive.

Supports for State and Local Governments

Michigan and its local communities, like other states, survived a significant economic crisis in 2020 due to federal action. Critical public services will not be able to meet the rising needs of citizens without strong state and local governments to support them in 2021, with many states forecasting continued shortfalls. Direct aid for state and local governments will ensure that communities will have the capacity to respond quickly to unique challenges that arise.

These areas of priority will work together to make sure no more citizens fall through the cracks. We urge you to champion these with your colleagues when deciding priorities for early session legislative action, which will be necessary for the well-being and future stability of our state.

Sincerely,

Matthew Gillard
President & CEO

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