



For Immediate Release
Feb. 17, 2021

Contact: Teri Banas, teri@michiganschildren.org
(517) 896-0241

Lt. Gov. Garlin Gilchrist II Helps Launch ‘Think Babies Michigan’ Campaign to Improve Prenatal-to-Age 3 Outcomes for Kids
Live Video Event begins 9 am Wed., Feb. 17

Lt. Gov. Garlin Gilchrist II – along with the state’s top child and family advocates and parent leaders – helped announce this morning the launch of **Think Babies Michigan**, a new \$1.5 million multi-year national effort led by the [Pritzker Children’s Initiative](#) to strengthen the state’s work to support babies, toddlers and their families, specifically those earning low wages. By nearly every measure, children living in poverty and children of color in Michigan are facing the biggest obstacles for a bright future.

With tens of thousands of Michigan’s most vulnerable families left reeling by the global pandemic, the new initiative will work to increase access and enrollment in high-quality services – child care, home visiting, early intervention and postpartum care – for families who earn low incomes and have children aged 0-3. **Think Babies Michigan** is led by a collaborative that includes [The Early Childhood Investment Corporation \(ECIC\)](#), [Hope Starts Here: Detroit’s Early Childhood Partnership](#), [Michigan’s Children, Michigan Council for Maternal and Child Health](#), the [Michigan League for Public Policy](#), and parent leaders Meredith Kennedy, of the Traverse City area, and Quinn Wright, of Metro Detroit. The campaign is a part of a partnership with the national campaign created by Zero to Three.

Lt. Gov. Gilchrist offered the Whitmer Administration’s support while including personal remarks as a father of young children.

Media were invited to access the live feed at <http://bit.ly/thinkbabiesmi>. Access the news conference there to watch the replay. Interviews with co-leaders of the effort are welcomed and can be arranged by contacting Teri Banas at teri@michiganschildren.org or (517) 896-0241. Learn more about the campaign and its plans here: www.ecic4kids.org/policy-thinkbabiesmi/

“**Think Babies Michigan** is a call to action for policymakers to prioritize the needs of infant, toddlers and their families and invest in our future,” said **Matt Gillard**, President & CEO of Michigan’s Children. “The goal is to build public awareness and public policymakers’ support for investments and policies that **make Michigan a top state to have and raise a baby.**”

Think Babies Michigan evolves from the work of the Michigan’s Prenatal-to-Three Policy Initiative, which involved nearly 1,000 people across the state in developing a five-point policy strategy to ensure healthy and thriving children. The collaborative, comprised of public, private and nonprofit groups,

competed and won the Pritzker policy action grant for Michigan – one of only 14 states to receive the award in the country.

By the end of 2025, its goal is to increase enrollment in child care, home visiting, early intervention and postpartum care for families with low incomes by 50 percent, reaching an additional 83,000 children 0-3 living in low-income households.

“Policies that dismantle structural and institutional inequities are critical to the work ahead,” said **Denise Smith**, Implementation Director of Hope Starts Here: Detroit’s Early Childhood Partnership. “This initiative’s promise is to ensure that race, income or zip code do not determine a child’s destiny in Michigan.”

Parent leader **Meredith Kennedy**, a Northern Michigan mother of six, a behavioral health manager, and member of the Inter-Tribal Council, will address the great unmet need for services among parents and babies in the state’s rural areas. “The first three years of a child’s life are critical, formative years. Yet opportunities to grow and flourish are not shared equally by all infants, toddlers and families,” she said. **Quinn Wright**, a financial adviser from the Detroit area, and father of three daughters, will address the impact that lack of affordable and accessible child care in Michigan has on family finances and career aspirations.

Addressing the media Wednesday morning were: **Alicia Guevara Warren**, ECIC’s Director of Statewide Policy Initiative; **Matt Gillard**; **Gilda Jacobs**, President & CEO of the Michigan League for Public Policy; **Meredith Kennedy**; **Denise Smith**; **Quinn Wright**; and **Amy Zaagman**, Executive Director of the Michigan Council for Maternal and Child Health.