



Gillard Urges Lawmakers 'Put Differences Aside' Over Federal Relief Funds; Agree to Help Kids and Families Now

March 5, 2021 - As vaccines are being distributed and a glimmer of light begins to appear at the end of the long tunnel of COVID-19, a real opportunity exists for our elected officials to truly support struggling children and families.

Despite the terrible relationship that currently exists between Michigan's Republican legislative leaders and Governor Gretchen Whitmer, they have a responsibility to put their differences aside and focus on what Michigan's kids and families need. The federal government has done their part by enacting a series of COVID relief bills and are poised to pass another one in the next week. These measures have sent significant amounts of taxpayer money down to the states to be spent on programs that help people that have been most impacted by the pandemic. This should truly be a no-brainer. In the vast majority of other states, the elected leaders quickly embraced the opportunity and came to agreement on how to get the money to the programs where it is most needed to support their most vulnerable citizens. Increased support for child care for working families and out of school time programs for underserved children are just a couple of the areas that should be prioritized with these funds.

Governor Whitmer, to her credit, has proposed using these federal funds to significantly increase funding for these and other critical programs. The Legislature is currently negotiating amongst itself to come up with their own plan to spend a portion of the available funds and the Republicans are intent on tying the allocation of the money to policy bills aimed at curbing the Governor's powers in dealing with the pandemic, something she obviously opposes.

The major problem now is that urgency is crucial. Michigan's children and families need help now. It is beyond time for our elected leaders to put their political differences aside just for a moment and get this money flowing to the critical programs that will help us emerge from the pandemic stronger.

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