



*Public policy
in the best interest
of children*

Release date: April 14, 2022

Contact: Teri Banas, 517.896.0241
teri@michiganschildren.org

Crystal Sanford-Brown Joins Michigan's Children Board of Directors

LANSING, MI --- **Crystal Sanford-Brown**, a long-time early childhood educator and advocate from the Detroit area (Bloomfield Hills), has joined the board of directors for Michigan's Children, the state-wide public policy and advocacy group known for its vigorous support of issues in support of children and families, particularly those facing the greatest challenges. Sanford-Brown is the founder of the nonprofit, Emerging Young Leadership, Inc., an organization dedicated to working with young people who have experienced Adverse Childhood Experiences by providing a safe space for sharing their stories.

Her appointment begins today, as she joins the 11-member body at its quarterly board meeting in Lansing. In her new role, Sanford-Brown will help shape the direction of the non-partisan organization as it works on a variety of issues related to children and youth of all ages (cradle to career) including their families. Those include foster care and kinship care, child care and early childhood concerns, adult education programs that build family literacy skills and help build economic self-sufficiency, homelessness and juvenile justice.

"We're thrilled that Crystal Sanford-Brown has agreed to lend her expertise to our board and help guide Michigan's Children into the future. She's a remarkable person who's dedicated her entire life to serving children, especially those who have experienced the most challenging childhood traumas," said Matt Gillard, Michigan's Children President & CEO.

Sanford-Brown is a certified state trainer in many areas related to child well-being, including child abuse, neglect, and human trafficking. She provides training on ways to protect children from sexual abuse, an issue she said has led to devastated lives impacted by drug abuse, human trafficking, self-hatred and suicide. Her own childhood experiences shaped the outspoken activist she is today. Sexually abused as a child, she has emerged as a strong advocate for destigmatizing victims, empowering them, and helping them find their voice. "For years, I walked in a shame of black clouds that never belonged to me. The shame belongs to the relatives who violated me," she said. Sanford-Brown said society is in a battle against child molestation with one in 10 children sexually abused before age 18.

Besides working as a state trainer and consultant, in recent years she served as manager of Campus Affairs at Oakland Community College (until 2017), as an adjunct professor there, and as the coordinator of the licensed on-campus Children's Centers at the Royal Oak and Orchard Ridge campuses (until 2013). She led OCC in restructuring five on-campus Children's Centers to align with state regulations for licensed centers.

She currently serves as vice president of the National Association for the Education of Young Children, and is a former president of the Michigan Association for the Education of Young Children.

Sanford-Brown has also spent decades as an outspoken advocate for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging. She recounts being introduced to the power of activism as an infant when her mother brought her and her sister to the “March on Washington” to hear the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. deliver his “I Have a Dream” speech in August 1963.

###

[Michigan's Children](#) is an independent voice working to reduce disparities in child outcomes from cradle through career through policy change. It has served to improve the odds for all children and families in Michigan for more than 25 years.