



Date: June 7, 2022

To: House Families, Children, and Seniors Committee
Re: Support for HB 6140 and 5756

Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. For over 30 years, Michigan's Children has learned from and raised up the voices of youth who have become homeless or have run away from home. The incredibly important experiences of these youths and their families have long informed researchers and led to adopted proven practices for improving outcomes for individuals and families in crisis.

Michigan's Children appears before this Committee today to offer our support for **HB 6140 and HB 5756**. This legislation would provide **important flexibility for agencies** that provide services that help meet the unique needs of each young person who enters their doors.

Services provided by federally- and state-funded **Transitional Living Programs** have successfully served youth between the ages of **16 and 22** for decades. Homeless Youth and Runaway services by responding to immediate crises of housing instability play a broader preventative role in Michigan's communities. This work prevents future foster care cases, prevents exposure to forced sex and human trafficking, and prevents chronic adult homelessness by serving young people at a critical time in their development.

However, we're here to point out a technical issue with the definition of what constitutes a **"minor child"** within existing Child Caring Institution language. The current definition was not written to encompass the complex situations for youth experiencing homelessness who are not currently involved with the foster care system, juvenile justice, or young adult voluntary foster care.

As a result, some programs have been forced to choose between serving either older young people or youth under age 18, turning some individuals away to less-stable living situations. This is an **unacceptable unintended consequence** of our regulatory system **that HB 6140 would fix**. The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services also publicly supports this legislation because it would allow for the best services for youth. This bill does not change the minor definition for foster care and juvenile justice agencies that fall under this section of law.

Secondly, we'd like to address **Michigan's Basic Shelter programs**, which serve homeless youth ages 18 and younger, with the goal of family reunification in every case.

These programs are successful **working to reunify families where issues can be resolved**. On occasion, situations occur in which a few extra days are required in order to move from a

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highly charged, emotionally charged state, to one in which both sides have had a chance to cool off and reflect.

The “safe harbor” extension in HB 5756 would create a brief moment of flexibility so that youth and families have the little bit of extra time they need to prepare for a successful reunification and avoid a serious move into the child welfare system.

Please consider supporting **HB 6140 and HB 5756**. **We respectfully appreciate your consideration.**

Best,

Matthew Gillard,
President & CEO,
Michigan’s Children

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