

**Statement from Rep. Elissa Slotkin**  
**2022 Youth-Led Candidate Forum**  
**Monday, September 19, 2022**

Good afternoon, and thank you to everyone for coming out on a Monday afternoon to this forum. My special thanks to the youth who have spent so much time studying and preparing for this event. I say all the time that our country needs engaged citizens and principled leaders, and there aren't many better ways to be an engaged citizen than by asking tough questions of the people who want to represent you.

I'm very sorry I couldn't join you in person. Unfortunately, we're voting on legislation in Congress this afternoon, so I've got to be in Washington D.C. But I can't wait until I can meet each of you and hear your stories. I hope we can do that soon.

I also want to applaud the youth here for your bravery. It takes no small amount of courage to get up in front of a room of people and share some of yourself, but I hope you know that your participation today is moving the ball forward on some of the most important issues facing our country.

That includes a number of debates we're having at the federal level. For instance, I know all too well how important gun safety is to all of you. After the violence we've struggled with in Lansing and after talking and listening to the people of this community, it has been very clear to me that we have to do something. Guns are now the leading cause of death for young people and as lawmakers, we have a responsibility to keep you safe.

We just passed a bill in Congress that was signed into law that will fund school safety programs, and make it more difficult for troubled kids to get their hands on assault weapons. It's not perfect, and it's not everything we wanted. But it's a first step in the right direction.

Speaking of school safety, it's also really important that we continue to invest in public education. All children deserve access to a high-quality education and in Congress, I'm fighting to fund science, technology, engineering, arts and math education, improve access to job training, and make college affordable for everyone who chooses to pursue it.

Finally, few issues are more top-of-mind right now than access to healthcare, and access to abortion in particular. Washington loves to make this a political issue, left versus right. It's not, though. This is a straight-up human issue, and a lot of women have very personal and complicated positions on abortion. But they should be allowed to have those positions, to make whatever choice they'd like to make, without the government telling them what they can and

can't do. This fall Michiganders will be able to vote on Proposition 3, a ballot question that would put reproductive freedom in our state constitution.

So when you vote this fall—and I really do urge all of you to vote if you can—you'll be voting on whether our state goes with the Roe standard or a statewide abortion ban. It's not up to the government. It's not up to politicians. It's up to you.

So thank you for your engagement and your energy. When you all use your voice to advocate for the issues that matter to you, your leaders listen – and that's an important power.

I hope to see you all soon, and enjoy the rest of the forum!