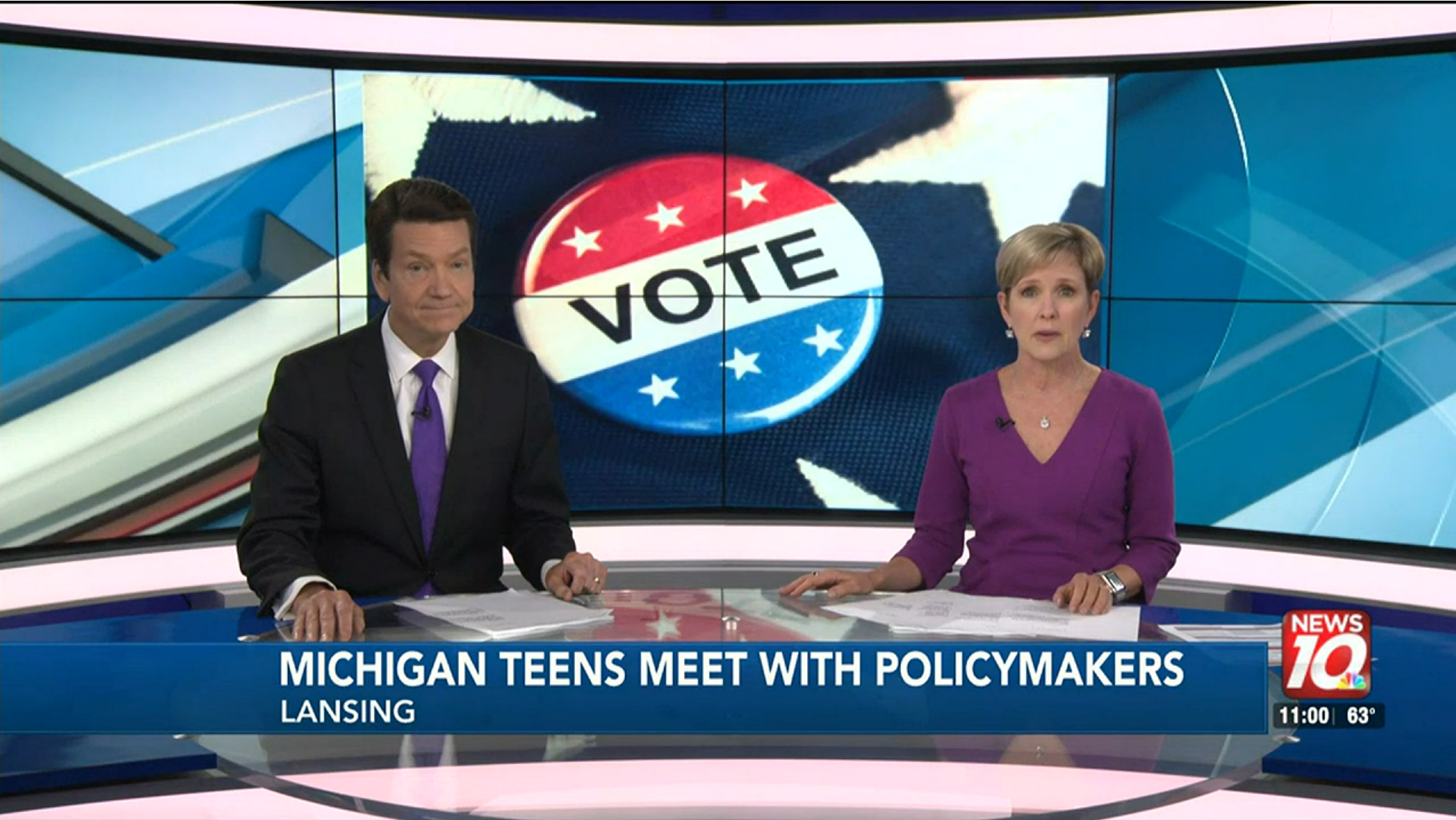


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Michigan youth asking questions, lawmakers respond

"It encouraged me to vote when I can"



Students enrolled in Ingham Academy gathered at LCC West Campus to share their concerns and fears with Michigan lawmakers.

By [Ta'Niyah Jordan](#)
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LANSING, Mich. (WILX) - Most high school students will not have a voice in the November election – but politicians on the ballot sat down Monday to hear what they have to say. It was a chance for Mid-Michigan teens to tell candidates what issues are important to them.

Students enrolled in [Ingham Academy](#) gathered at LCC West Campus to share their concerns and fears with Michigan lawmakers. Not being able to vote in the upcoming election didn't stop students from talking about issues that effect them now – and in the future.

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"To hear from young people even if they aren't of voting age. I mean these people are running to represent these communities in our state government and they're going to be representing all of these people – whether they're 16 years old or 65 years old," said Matt Gillard, President and CEO of [Michigan's Children](#).

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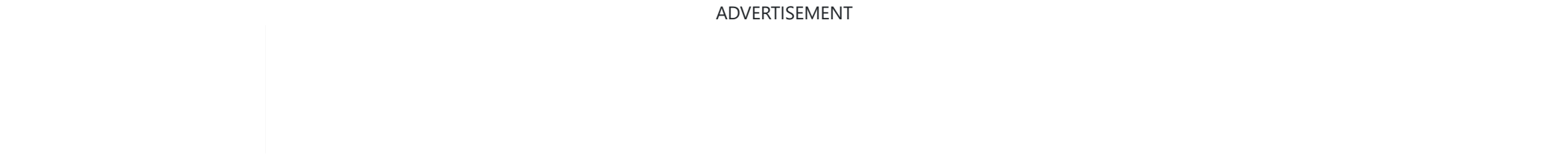
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it makes me feel good. it makes me feel like i'm being heard. someone's listening to me. it makes me feel like i'm making an impact on the world. it just makes me feel special," said 17-year-old Sierra Garza.

Garza spoke at the event. Her focus was reproductive freedom.

"When they asked me like what do I think should be going on, it made me feel different because what, a candidate's asking me what I feel like should be going on in the city – it was just a different type of moment for me because I never thought that would happen," said 17-year-old Johnathon Wallace.

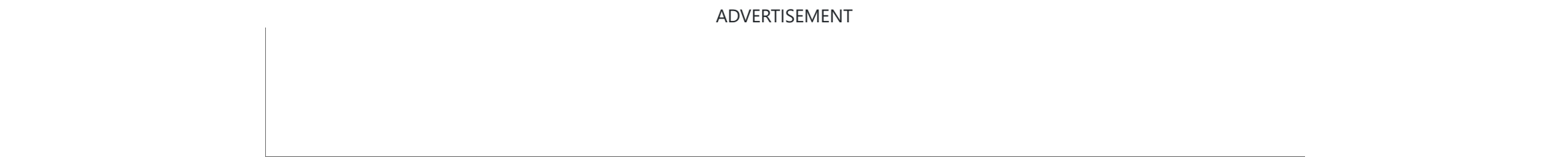


Both students said they didn't think their concerns mattered to lawmakers unless they could cast a ballot. Having a conversation with lawmakers changed that.

"And it's just so many negative other things that keep you from voting. But this made me look at it all different," said Wallace.

Garza and Wallace said issues like abortion, police brutality, and education encouraged them to use their voices. And when they turn 18, they'll use their votes.

"So it's important for them to know about the issues that are facing young people in these communities if they really want to be an effective member of our state government," said Gillard.



Michigan's Children has been creating opportunities for youth to meet with policymakers to share their experiences for nearly 20 years.

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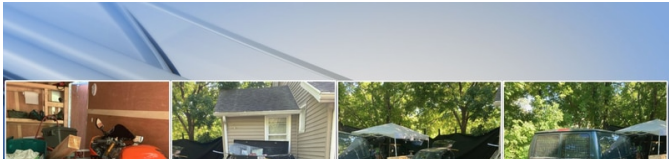
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