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Immediate Release

Burma Center Draws Families Focused on Early Childhood Issues **Battle Creek Parents, Caregivers Pose Questions before Candidates Wednesday**

Battle Creek – The state of the community’s infants and toddlers and their families will take center stage at an early childhood-focused forum for candidates in the 44th state House and 18th state Senate races on **Wednesday, Sept. 28 (5:30-7 pm)** at The Burma Center, 765 Upton Ave., in Springfield.

Organizers from [The Burma Center](#), [Pulse](#), [Voces](#) and the [Southwestern Michigan Urban League](#) are working together with statewide advocates from [Think Babies Michigan](#) and [Michigan’s Children](#) to host the program. Interpreters will be available for both Burmese & Spanish speaking attendees.

The event is targeted to community parents, care providers, policy-makers, and other members of the public who value exploring how every child can have the best start in life, leading to later success in school and life. Issues will include child care, perinatal support and home visiting, and *Early On* services for children 0-3 with disabilities or developmental delays.

This is a nonpartisan forum – not a debate. The forum’s format will provide each candidate with one minute to introduce themselves, and answer questions prepared by families. The order of questions will rotate among the candidates. The sponsoring organizations do not endorse candidates, but are committed to voter and candidate education and engagement.

Invited candidates include: state **Rep. Jim Haadsma** (D) and challenger **David Morgan** (R) in Michigan’s 44th State House District, which includes the city of Battle Creek, northern Calhoun County, and Albion; as well as state **Rep. Thomas Albert** (R) and **Kai De Graaf** (D) in the 18th State Senate district, located in the city of Battle Creek, Barry County, and parts of Allegan, Ionia, and Kent counties.

“Creating an early childhood system that ensures every child has an opportunity to thrive requires that our policy-makers know what issues are important to families,” said **Kathy Szenda Wilson**, co-executive director of Pulse at the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research. “By hosting a candidate forum, we are providing an opportunity for our local candidates to hear directly from our families as well as key local stakeholders they trust.”

Matt Gillard, president & CEO of Michigan’s Children, the Lansing-based, statewide public policy and advocacy organization, will moderate. “Early childhood has truly emerged as an issue policy-makers must pay attention to because families demand it, and our future citizens, workers and leaders require it. Families of

young children face a great deal of challenges today, and it says a lot about Battle Creek to have civic groups united to bring concerns candidates.

“This is what the election process is all about - voters speaking up, and candidates listening to their constituents in order to make policy decisions in the best interest of kids and families,” Gillard added.

To register for the free forum using Eventbrite, [click here](#).

Media interviews can be arranged with hosts and questioners in advance, or that day.

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The Burma Center empowers Burmese Americans and the Battle Creek community through advocacy, engagement, and education to support the whole person.



Pulse is a partner, advocate and coach improving early childhood development in Michigan.

The Southwestern Michigan Urban League is a civil rights organization that exists to bring about social parity for African Americans and other disadvantaged populations.



Voces is working towards promoting an inclusive society by providing LatinX families with opportunities and resources leading to individual and community transformation.

Think Babies Michigan is a collaborative of more than 1,900 members — leaders, experts, families, organizations and providers — working together to improve the lives of babies prenatal to three years old and, therefore, the well-being of our state as a whole.



Michigan's Children is the only statewide, multi-issue advocacy organization focused solely on public policy in the best interest of children from cradle to career and their families. We have been creating opportunities for young people and caregivers to share their stories, concerns and suggestions directly with policymakers since 1996. As a non-profit 501(c) (3) organization, our forums are presented as a non-partisan activity.