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One in Six Adults are Functionally Illiterate – This Candidate Forum Wants to Talk about That with Those Running for Congress, the State Legislature and County Board

Muskegon Heights, Mich. - The stage is set for one of the most distinctive candidate forums in Muskegon, bringing federal, state, and county commission candidates together with community members focused on reading and literacy. The candidate forum is sponsored by [Read Muskegon](#), the [Michigan Adult, Community & Alternative Education Association](#) (MACAE), and [Michigan's Children](#).

The event – “**A Community-Led Candidate Forum on Education & Literacy**” - will take place on **Monday, Sept. 26, 2022 (5:00 pm to 7:30 pm)** at Covenant Community Church in Muskegon Heights, 134 E Barney Ave, Muskegon, MI 49444.

Organizers have invited candidates from the newly drawn **2nd and 3rd Congressional districts; the 32nd State Senate District; the 87th, 88th, 89th, and 102nd State House districts; and the Muskegon County Board of Commissioners Districts 1-7.**

This forum is presented as a non-partisan activity. It is not a debate. Neither do the event sponsors endorse candidates.

Forum organizers point to the high illiteracy rate in the United States – translating to one in six adults who are functionally illiterate or reading at or below the 4th grade level – as a concern for not only family economic stability but community health. In Muskegon County, that equates to more than 23,000 adults, and they say more needs to be done to break those barriers here at home.

“The adverse effects of illiteracy are felt in our economic, education, criminal justice, and healthcare systems,” said **Read Muskegon Executive Director Melissa Moore**, who is leading the candidate forum. “Read Muskegon is breaking the generational cycle of illiteracy by providing customized programs that meet the unique needs of our learners and building community partnerships to maximize our impact. We have a lot to talk about to strengthen the skills and earning potential of thousands of our residents.”

Michigan's Children
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Forums like these are an important place for policymakers to hear directly from those they intend to serve, said **MACAE's Executive Director Patrick Brown, the evening's emcee.** "This forum is a good space to articulate the needs of some of our state's most marginalized populations –low literate, low income," he added. "This is also part of a broader conversation around how the adult education community is well situated to address issues in our state that are related to literacy – the state's talent shortages, economic strength, workplace literacy, and gainful employment."

Matt Gillard, President & CEO, Michigan's Children, said he's been impressed to see the strong level of commitment in the Muskegon community to bring voters and candidates together around the issue of literacy, an often unspoken problem in society. "Elections are all about candidates listening to the voices of constituents, and elevating work around solving community problems" Gillard said. "This forum aims to do just that."

Invited candidates include: **2nd Congressional District race** – Jerry Hilliard (D) and John Moolenaar (R); **3rd Congressional District race** – Hillary Scholten (D) and John Gibbs (R); **32nd Senate District** - Terry Sabo (D) and Jon Bumstead (R); **87th state House District** – Will Snyder and Michael Haueisen (R); **88th state House District** – Christine Baker (D) and Greg VanWoerkom (R); **89th House District** – Sharon McConnon (D) and Luke Meerman (R); **102nd House District** – Brian Hosticka (D) and Curt VanderWall (R); **County Commission candidates - District 1** – Bruce E. Froelich (D) and Kim Cyr (R); **District 2** – Gary Foster (D) and Zach Lahring (R); **District 3** – Ashley Podein (D) and Michelle Hazekamp (R); **District 4** – Marcia Hovey-Wright (D) and Dan Potts (R); **District 5** – Charles Nash (D) and David Dursema (R); **District 6** – Jessica Cook (D) and Doug Brown (R); **District 7** – Darrel L. Paige (D) and Steve Null (R).

As an added service, **the NAACP chapter** will conduct voter registration at the church. There will be a watch party for the northern part of the county at the White Lake Community Library, 3900 White Lake Drive.

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Since 2005, Read Muskegon has been working to break the generational cycle of illiteracy in Muskegon County. As the only non-profit organization in the county solely focused on removing barriers to literacy for all individuals, Read Muskegon has taken the lead in creating community-based, systemic change that will result in a more literate Muskegon County.



Since 1983, the Michigan Association of Community and Adult Education (MACAE) has provided professional development, resources and training, best practices and networking for adult, alternative community education leaders and workforce development professionals. We are a grass roots organization, organized by practitioners, helping other practitioners.



*Public policy
in the best interest
of children*

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.

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