

# 2022 Annual Report



Michigan's  
Children



# Table of Contents

- 3 | CEO Message
- 4 | State Budget Wins
- 6 | Coalitions and Partnerships
- 7 | 2022 Election
- 8 | Programming
- 10 | Amplifying the Message
- 11 | Our Team

*Michigan’s Children is the only statewide independent voice working to ensure that public policies are made in the best interest of children from cradle to career. We focus on influencing public policies that can reduce disparities in child outcomes such as the academic achievement gap disparities that are caused by economic hardships coupled with structural barriers by race or ethnicity.*

*Our goals are to catalyze support from elected and appointed public officials to prioritize the needs of children, youth and families with the most challenges in their lives – children of color, children from low-income families, and children served by the foster and juvenile justice systems – and to ensure that their decision-making reflects that; and to build public will and influence public action.*



## Out from Behind the Pandemic, and a New Political Order

*Matt Gillard*  
*President & CEO, Michigan’s Children*

In 2022, we finally emerged from the self-isolation of a worldwide pandemic to new prospects for re-engaging with a changed world. With the dangers of COVID in retreat, a longstanding political dynamic crumbled under the historic midterm elections in Michigan. All major government branches – the Governor’s Office, Secretary of State, Attorney General, the state House and Senate – were now assumed by Democrats swept into office in a political upset unseen in 40 years. Analyzing the returns, we shifted our strategies, and in collaboration with dozens of partner organizations, positioned ourselves for new policy wins focused on equity for the most marginalized and vulnerable among us.

Elections are huge advocacy opportunities, and at Michigan’s Children, we started the year in high gear, and stayed that way. 2022 was a big year for us as we ramped up our youth- and family-led candidate forums, crisscrossing the state to host 11 separate community forums in communities from Traverse City to Muskegon, Battle Creek to Detroit. With support from 19 local nonprofits and community groups, the forums brought out hundreds of voters to press their issues, meet candidates, and develop new champions. The public meetings and resulting conversations laid the groundwork for important initiatives and better outcomes for kids and families in the future.

I invite you to take a few minutes to review this latest annual report. Many of you have had a stake in making positive change happen with us. As a small nonprofit now entering its fourth decade in public service, Michigan’s Children knows that our success is due to the countless friends and allies in advocacy – the grasstops and the grassroots – who have joined in our mission to make life better for all Michigan’s children and their families.

Thank you,

Matt Gillard, President & CEO,  
Michigan’s Children

# State Budget Wins

**2022 Highlights** | Through targeted legislative meetings, collaboration with partner organizations from afterschool, early childhood, and education during the 2022 state budget process, Michigan’s Children saw important wins for improving outcomes for our youngest learners and school-age students including students from historically marginalized populations.




\$7

MILLION

increase for *Early On* services for families of children 0-3 with developmental disabilities and delays.





\$3

MILLION

increase for the state’s Infant Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Program to help prevent expulsion of children from child care and preschools due to challenging behaviors.

\$25

MILLION

New one-time funding for after school programs across Michigan.



RESTORED EDUCATIONAL FUNDING FOR FOSTER CARE

After we met with state Legislators and department officials, the state reversed an earlier decision by the Department of Health and Human Services that removed funding for education planners working one-on-one with youth from foster care. As vital liaisons between the child welfare and education systems, education planners have provided important connections for wards of the state who are served by two departments typically independent of one another.



EDUCATIONAL EQUITY DOLLARS

With help from other advocacy groups, we secured continued school funding targeted to ensure educational equity for students who receive at-risk and special education services. Additional dollars were also provided for infrastructure needs.



\$200,000

FOR KINSHIP FAMILY SUPPORT

# Coalitions and Partnerships

**2022 Highlights** | A significant chunk of our policy work with dozens of statewide and national partners was set in motion in 2022, and we have continued that advocacy push into 2023.

## Helping Michigan Families by Increasing the EITC

Expanding the state’s Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) has a lot of supporters among family advocates and business leaders in Michigan, even if it failed to win Legislative approval in 2022. Our work as a leading partner of the Michigan EITC Coalition did ensure that expanding the EITC would be a goal of the 2023-24 Michigan Legislature, however.

## Collective Action through Mobilization

We hosted the first two of four Think Babies Michigan all-member coalition meetings, initiating quarterly meetings for mobilizing and expanding participation to improve public policies for babies and toddlers in Michigan. In conjunction with the Policy Equity Group, we launched a Young Professionals in Early Childhood Policy Group.

## Reforming Juvenile Justice

A series of legislative proposals for reforming Michigan’s Juvenile Justice System failed to move out of the Legislature in 2022, but the effort set the stage for introducing new bills in 2023. Michigan’s Children worked with the Michigan Center for Youth Justice and other juvenile justice advocates to advance the issue.

## Advancing Support for Runaway and Homeless Youth Services

Though unsuccessful in 2022, reform efforts to address youth homelessness led by Michigan’s Children and the Michigan Network for Youth and Families in 2022 set the stage in 2023 for the first major new investment in youth services for runaway and homeless youth in years.

## Championing Educational Supports for Youth from Foster Care

Michigan’s Children, along with partners including Fostering Success Michigan, championed the start of a year-long state departmental workgroup to address the educational needs of youth in foster care.

## Supporting the MKCC & Kinship Care

Staff led an analysis of the kinship care recommendations of the Governor and State House’s Foster Care Task Forces to help the Michigan Kinship Care Coalition develop their own strategic plans for building on this work.

## Mobilizing Advocates through Dome Days

Michigan’s Children continued to work with partner organizations – namely, the Michigan Network for Youth and Families, the Michigan Kinship Care Coalition – to organize statewide advocates around in-person and virtual meetings with state lawmakers. Assistance included helping to create policy goals, draft talking points and meeting notes, and direct advocacy training for attendees.

## Planning Begins: Michele Corey Child Advocacy Summit

In 2022, Michigan’s Children staff and colleagues of our esteemed long-time vice president Michele Corey launched efforts for a major advocacy training program in her memory. Setting a date for the day-long event on April 27, 2023, we proudly announced plans to invite grassroots advocates to Lansing for inspiration, education and networking opportunities.

# The 2022 Election Season: Lifting up Youth and Family Voices

**2022 Highlights** | The new U.S. Census counts led to an overhaul of political district boundaries in the 2022 statewide elections with voters facing many newer and more unfamiliar office-seekers at all levels. Mindful of the importance of lifting up youth and family voices against this backdrop, we led a record number of candidate forums across the state where constituents share their experiences about issues most relevant to children, youth, and families. Staff also produced an Election Year Engagement Guide for Voters featuring five sections devoted to Child Care, Family Issues, Foster Care, Learning, and Mental Health.

## 11 COMMUNITY FORUMS

Led by youth, parents and community-interest groups in Lansing, Detroit, Royal Oak, Battle Creek, Kalamazoo, Grand Rapids, Muskegon Heights, Bay City, and Traverse City.





## 19 PARTNERS

The Children’s Center in Detroit, Read Muskegon, Peckham Youth Services in Lansing, First Steps Kent in Grand Rapids, the Boys and Girls Club of the Great Lakes Bay Region in Bay City, the Northwest Chapter of the Michigan Association for Infant Mental Health in Traverse City were among 19 nonprofits and community groups we partnered with to stage the forums.

We reached out to well over 100 candidates and brought them to the table to answer questions posed by community youth, parents, and service providers. Office-seekers represented a wide variety of races including Congressional, state House, state Senate, and county commission districts from lower to northern Michigan.

## 54 CANDIDATE RACES

# Programming that Strengthens Child Advocacy

**2022 Highlights** | Michigan’s Children’s monthly online advocacy training drew hundreds of advocates and activists in 2022 for one-hour long sessions designed to improve advocates’ effectiveness. Dozens of experts joined the program to lend their expertise. These **Lunch & Learn** sessions were carried live on Zoom and Facebook, and recorded for later viewing at no cost to our audiences. Our **Speaking for Kids Podcast** continued to build its audience on podcast streaming sites and YouTube through timely and relevant discussions on child and family policy issues key to Michigan’s future.



michiganschildren.org

## 'Are the Kids Alright?' Exploring Children's Mental Health in Michigan

Wednesday, April 20, 2022, Noon to 1 pm

Join Michigan's Children and a panel of advocates for a discussion on investing more in children's mental health in the FY23 state budget cycle. **Register today!**



**Kae Dubay**  
Parent Representative,  
Early On Michigan Interagency  
Coordinating Council



**Mary Mackrain**  
Consultant, MDHHS Infant and  
Early Childhood Mental Health  
Consultation program



**Renee Topolski**  
Deputy Director,  
School-Community Health  
Alliance of Michigan



**Rylee Tuggle**  
Author/ Board Certified  
Behavior Analyst  
"The Trusted Trio"



**Danielle Rice**  
Workforce Development  
Specialist, Michigan Association  
for Infant Mental Health

### Lunch & Learn

Popular Lunch & Learn topics and panelists included veteran Lansing insiders and lobbyists sharing their views on the year's election results during a program titled, "What Just Happened?" Another, "Are the Kids All Right? Exploring Children's Mental Health in Michigan," featured a panel of five behavioral health and policy experts from across the state. Another, co-branded with Think Babies Michigan, promoted "Get Involved: Time to Speak up for Home Visiting and MIECH," a discussion on what's happening in Washington, D.C. around funding these early childhood programs. Another early childhood-focused program that drew great attention was about Michigan's Early Childhood Workforce Crisis.



michiganschildren.org

## Get Involved: Time to Speak Up for Home Visiting and MIECHV

Wed., August 17, Noon

Policy makers at all levels of government must work together to ensure the stability of home visiting in the short and long term. Learn vital advocacy skills. Join the conversation.

**Register today!**



# Speaking for Kids Podcast

Listen on Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts and Spotify.

## Justice by Geography? Addressing Juvenile Detention

Michigan's Children

michiganschildren.org/  
speaking-for-kids-the-podcast/



**Rusty Merchant**  
McAlvey Merchant & Associates



**Dinah Campbell**  
Parent



**Christine MacDonald**  
Detroit Free Press



### Exchange for Change (E4C)

Working with our partners at Peckham Youth Services and Ingham Academy, we launched a novel four-part series of roundtable dialogues between court-involved youth and the Lansing Police Department to address issues of police violence, youth voice, and the impact on communities of color. The program has continued into 2023 and has expanded to include law enforcement from three agencies.

### Speaking for Kids

Speaking for Kids, the Podcast from Michigan's Children featured nationally known experts including Yale University researcher Dr. Walter Gilliam ("Fostering Early Childhood Mental Health") and senior economist Dr. Timothy Bartik of the Upjohn Institute for Employment Research ("The Business Case for High-Quality Child Care"), and other compelling conversations over the need to repair systems that impact youths' lives. Among these were interviews with the mother of a youth detained in the Wayne County Detention Center and the Free Press reporter who helped break an expose on poor treatment of detained youth ("Justice by Geography? Addressing Juvenile Detention"), with insights on legislative reforms underway in the juvenile justice system and the foster care system. U.S. Senator Debbie Stabenow joined host Matt Gillard in 2022 to address the impact of President Biden's Build Back Better plan on Michigan.

# Amplifying the Message

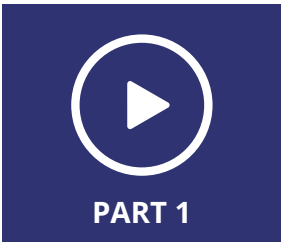
**2022 Highlights** | Internal and external communications work in 2022 include the distribution of twice-a-month e-bulletins to thousands of partners and advocates in Michigan; legislative communications, news releases on timely issues; and professional communications support to partners.

### Special Reports

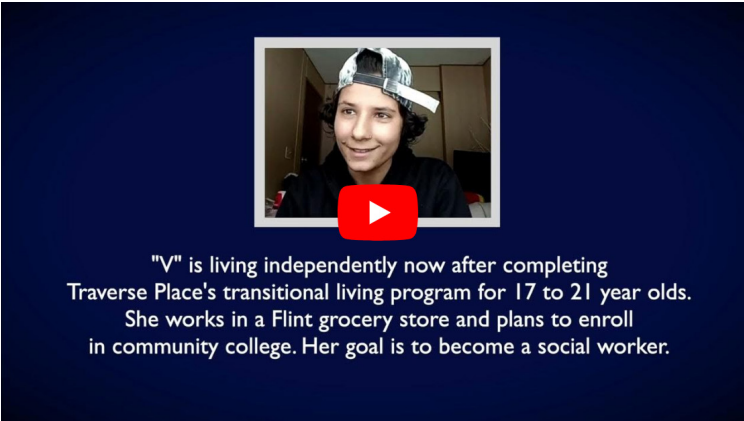
“Who’s Who in Michigan Legislative Leadership” for the 2023-2024 session served as a guide of the newly elected movers and shakers at the Capitol with bios and contact information shared with our advocates and allies via the Speaking for Kids e-bulletin and our social media platforms. Later in the year, we widely distributed our new 2022 Election Year Engagement Guide for Voters to advocates and lawmakers.

### Video Stories

As a service to partners, Michigan’s Children provides a variety of professional support services in advocacy communications to small nonprofits that share our policy priorities. One prime example in 2022 was the development of a video identifying the need to address the gaps in state services to Michigan’s runaway and homeless youth. Through interviews with youth and service providers, we raised issues regarding the victimization of unhoused youth and delivered the video stories to every Michigan lawmaker. The project coincided with the Michigan Network for Youth and Families’ Dome Day event.



Click the above video boxes to view parts one and two of Investing in Michigan’s Future Preventing Youth Homelessness.



### Media Placement

News coverage was strong and well-deserved throughout the year, but in particular during the campaign season in October and November with 13 earn-media placements of important issue-focused stories. Media outlets from across the state carried the coverage, including WWMT-TV (Kalamazoo), Channel 9 &10 (Traverse City), Fox 17-TV (Grand Rapids), Mlive online (Grand Rapids), Model D Media online (Detroit), The State News (Lansing), and Fox 47-TV (Lansing). Several of the forums led the nightly news casts (Lansing and Grand Rapids) and one other generated a televised morning show feature in Traverse City.

### Commentaries and Stories

Our involvement in the Coalition to Expand the federal Child Tax Credit resulted in a newspaper commentary featuring Matt Gillard in the Lansing State Journal. Among other media hits was a story posted in Bridge Michigan about the bed shortage crisis for youth in detention and the foster care system (“Michigan Takes Steps to Boost Bed Capacity for Kids in Mental health Crisis”). We also facilitated a series of four commentaries featuring “Exchange for Change” law enforcement officers and youth in the Lansing State Journal.

# Our Team

### New Faces at Michigan’s Children

Lindsay W. Huddleston II joined Michigan’s Children as our newest policy associate focused on kinship care. Michigan’s Children’s Board of Directors also gained two new members - Chrystal Sanford-Brown and Lee Fitzpatrick.

### Michigan’s Children’s Board of Directors

#### OFFICERS

Chair | Kurt Strehlke  
Secretary | Shaun Wilson  
Treasurer | Tony Stamas

#### DIRECTORS

Jennifer Bowman, Lee Fitzpatrick, Kristen Kangas-Kraft, Yazeed Moore, Terry Murphy, Crystal Sanford-Brown, Diana Wong, and John Ziraldo

### Michigan’s Children Staff

Matt Gillard, President & CEO; Bobby Dorigo Jones, Vice President; Kali Montgomery, Director of Administration; Teri Banas, Director for Programs and Communications; Stephen Wallace, Regional Engagement and Mobilization Associate; Madeline Elliott, Policy and Programs Associate; and Lindsay W. Huddleston II, Policy and Program Associate.

# Thank you to our generous funders

- W.K. Kellogg Foundation | \$27,000
- The Skillman Foundation | \$125,000
- The Early Childhood Investment Corporation | \$85,000
- Flinn Foundation | \$65,000
- Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation | \$50,000
- Michigan Adult, Community and Alternative Education Association | \$17,494
- Rollin M. Gerstacker Foundation | \$10,000
- Michigan Network for Youth and Families | \$500

Will this change the odds for Michigan's children?  
That's the most important question we ask ourselves  
when we set our legislative priorities.

Michigan's  
*Children*