



Michigan's Children's Announces Support for Paid Family Leave Policy for Michigan Families, along with Need for Reliable State Funding Stream for Child Care Costs

Aug. 30, 2023 – Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's call to expand paid leave to Michigan families is a game-changer for the state that deserves immediate attention in the Legislature, said **Michigan's Children President & CEO Matt Gillard** on Wednesday.

"There are times when families are required to fully care for their own without the risk of losing one's job and livelihood. Caring long-term for a sick child, partner, disabled family member, an elder at the end of life, a newborn, or newly adopted child or foster child . . . These are the times when Michigan families need a comprehensive system that ensures partial wage replacement, and continued job and health care protections to ensure family economic stability," Gillard continued.

"Michigan's Children fully supports forward-thinking efforts by leaders such as Sen. Erika Geiss in the Michigan Senate and Governor Whitmer to craft legislation that accomplishes that. It's time that our state looks to the future and finds ways to attract more families with children to Michigan and provide needed supports for those already here."

Gillard was responding to Governor Whitmer announcement today of her Legislative priorities for the rest of the year. Gillard said government leaders should consider that:

- Family paid leave benefits most workers who earn low and moderate incomes. It is especially critical for underpaid workers, many of whom are Black, Brown, and immigrant women, who are less likely to have access to the time off work they need and deserve, according to the **Michigan Paid Leave for All Coalition**.
- About 77 percent — about 3.7 million workers — do not have access to paid family leave in Michigan. Even unpaid leave under the federal Family and Medical Leave Act is inaccessible for 63 percent of Michiganders, according to the National Partnership for Women and Families.

Gillard also addressed the political challenges of adopting a paid family leave program that's acceptable to business interests, and in the Legislature, the most conservative and progressive members alike.

- As enabling legislation is debated, among the tough issues to be resolved include the kinds and sizes of businesses required to participate, in particular small businesses, he said "There are employers who would welcome a paid family leave program **as a valued employee incentive** but could not compete in the marketplace without a level playing field — that is, unless all businesses would be required to offer it," he said.
- Deliberations on enacting legislation should also include one of the most complex challenges for Michigan families face today — the cost of child care. Gillard said it's time for the state to create a **state-funded revenue stream for family child care costs**, and urged lawmakers to factor in this investment in the final paid family leave plan. Rising child care costs nationwide have resulted in the loss of thousands of child care businesses, causing working parents — many women - to quit their jobs to stay home, creating upheaval in the job market. The issue has grabbed headlines and occupied community forums and legislative conversations for years.

"With a slim Democratic majority, party leaders won't always have the chance to make the case for paid family leave in Michigan," he said. "We believe they would be wise to act quickly, and incorporate the growing need for a reliable state child care funding stream. Pandemic relief dollars are ending, and it's time we take these steps to adopt a Michigan plan to help families overcome difficult but all-too-common life challenges."