



Date: June 6, 2023

To: House Families, Children, and Seniors Committee

Re: Support for HB 4676, 4677, 4678

Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Our organization's thirty years of work following research and learning from young people and families with lived experience guide our advocacy for solutions to improve educational outcomes for youth experiencing foster care.

**Michigan's Children writes in support of HB 4676, 4677, and 4678 which are a first step towards holistic reforms to ensure that every young person experiencing foster care in Michigan has the strongest path possible to a high school diploma.**

Michigan is nationally recognized for its strong postsecondary outcomes relative to other states for students who experienced foster care, but we trail national averages in graduating students in foster care from high school. For students experiencing foster care in the high school class of 2020, the four-year graduation rate was just 39.7%. After two additional years to achieve a diploma, that number still did not reach 60%. These rates are the lowest of any group of students that Michigan monitors and publicly reports. They are the result of a cascade of systemic failures, some of which are shared by other students who experience instability and trauma, and some of which stem from added layers of difficulty that are unique to the foster care experience.

As original partners in the passage of the Children's Assurance of Foster Care Quality Act, we support HB 4676 which evolves the list of "assurances" to explicitly reflect a child's right to a credit-bearing education. We also support the new requirements for reporting and audits of whether the educational arrangements at each CCIs are following all applicable laws and regulations, which HB 4677 and 78 would enact.

**Above all though, we emphasize that this legislation will only reach their desired effects with additional steps.** Truly ensuring equitable K-12 outcomes for children and youth experiencing foster care will require a range of solutions, including:

- 1) **Expanding access to transcripts & other key education records and plans.**
- 2) **Coordinating "education planning" processes currently mandated in state law including IEPs, transition plans, and education development plans.**

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- 3) **Protecting credits earned and ensuring that a student in foster care's pathway to graduation is not disrupted** by a transfer to a new school district.
- 4) **Dramatically increasing capacity from both outside state systems and within public agencies to provide individualized attention to the educational needs of students experiencing foster care**, and eventually all students who experience education instability, ensuring that the voices of youth and their legal rightsholders for their education are at the table.
- 5) **Improving transition resources for older youth in foster care** and minimizing placement changes for youth in care.

Thank you for your support in addressing this unacceptable inequity within our educational system. We support these bills and expect these to be the first steps in a process of transformative change. Young people involved in our government-run systems, especially young people experiencing foster care, deserve nothing less.

Best,  
Matthew Gillard  
President & CEO  
Michigan's Children