



Date: April 10, 2024

To: Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Health and Human Services

Re.: Support for FY2025 State Budget funding increase for Runaway and Homeless Youth Services

Thank you Madam Chair and committee members. I am Lindsay Huddleston, a policy and program associate with Michigan's Children. Michigan's Children's is a nonprofit child policy advocacy organization. Our goal is to pursue public policy in the best interest of children and families from cradle to career. One of the many partners that we have the privilege to work with is an association called the Michigan Network for Youth and Families. This is an association of 21 runaway homeless youth service providers throughout the state. Last year we came to you with a request for increased funding for these entities, these folks that are servicing runaway and homeless youth and their communities, for a request of increased funding for \$10 million. I want to thank you, first of all, for getting us over halfway there. We did see an increase in this line item last year of \$5.3 million - that was the first increase in a long, long time. It was a significant increase, and that money is actually helping in your communities right now.

What we're asking for this year is to finish this job and get us to that \$10 million request, so an additional \$4.7 million. The Governor's budget recommendation did not include any increase; it did include and maintained stable funding from that \$5.3 million. A \$5.3 million increase from last year, but did not include that next step of the next \$4.7 million. We currently have, I think, eight counties that are unserved by these providers right now. It's basically the northwest corner of the lower peninsula and most of the UP are unserved. The expansion would allow us to expand into those unserved areas, as well as add an additional provider to Wayne County. I don't have to tell you - you know - what the impacts of lack of stable housing is on young people, especially educationally. It is very difficult for young people who are not in stable housing. They are very much more susceptible to exploitation and child trafficking, as well as mental health issues which are really a big concern for young people. The service providers from Michigan Network for Youth and Families are able to address all of these needs in critical ways. They have excellent relationships with local school districts. They are able to create community service components of their services which really lead to a reduction in exploitation and the challenges around exploitation. And they are able to provide mental health services to a lot of these young people as well.

One other small change as well is in the language that was included with the increase last year had some limitations on it. We're asking for a change, and this has been submitted, for some more flexibility in that language. The idea, the hope with these state dollars was that there would be more flexible. A lot of these programs are operating in older buildings with some challenging infrastructure. So, the hope is that some of these state dollars will allow them to address some of those infrastructure needs. So, we're looking for some more flexibility in the language with this money as well. Thank you, Madam Chair, and I'll take any questions anybody has.