



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.**

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### Officers

**Kurt Strehlke, Chair**  
*Bank of America*

**Shaun Wilson, Vice Chair**  
*Cadence*

**Tony Stamas, Treasurer**  
*Midland Business Alliance*

### Directors

**Jennifer Bowman**  
*Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity*

**Lee Fitzpatrick**  
*Alpena Schools*

**Kristen Kangas-Kraft**  
*Blue Cross Shield of Michigan*

**Yazeed Moore**  
*W.K. Kellogg Foundation*

**Terry Murphy**  
*Retired - Certified Public Accountant*

**Crystal Sanford-Brown**  
*Founder of the nonprofit, Emerging Young Leadership, Inc*

**Diana Wong**  
*Eastern Michigan University*

**John Ziraldo**  
*Commonwealth Consulting*

**Matthew Gillard**  
*President and CEO*