



Public policy in the best interest of children

Date: May 16, 2023

To: House Families, Children, and Seniors Committee
Re: Support for HB 4085, 4086, and 4087

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 us to fight for proven solutions to improve outcomes when it comes to youth experiencing homelessness and runaway and their families.

Michigan's Children writes in support of HB 4085, 4086, and 4087 which would align our state's public policies for youth services with federal regulations and national best practice and enable our state's runaway and homeless youth agencies to provide services that respond to the individual needs of each young person who walks through their doors.

First, for Michigan's Basic Center programs, which serve homeless youth ages 17 and under, the goal of every youth case is family reunification. These programs successfully reunify families and prevent child welfare involvement and future homelessness because Basic Center cases are often situations that can be worked through. These programs are not allowed to serve someone with an open child welfare or juvenile delinquency case. But sometimes, a shelter needs just a little more time to contact a parent or guardian, or an extra day to bring a situation that is highly emotionally to one where sides have had a chance to cool off and reflect. HB 4085 creates not a requirement, but an additional moment of flexibility in line with national best practice to achieve a successful reunification and avoid a more serious case that winds up in the child welfare system.

Next, Michigan's Transitional Living Programs have successfully served youth from their 16th to their 22nd birthday for decades. The federal grants that have provided core funding for many TLPs for more than 40 years mandate that to receive this funding, programs serve this entire population. However, TLPs are licensed as CCIs, but the existing Child Caring Institution definition of a minor youth is not written to carve out a definition for the youth served by these programs, young people who are experiencing homeless but whom the state has chosen not to open a foster care, juvenile justice, or young adult voluntary foster care case. TLPs are regulated by a section of law that does not explicitly outline their specific area of responsibility. This is an unacceptable unintended consequence of our regulatory system that HB 4086 would fix. MDHHS has voiced support for creating the allowance provided by this bill to ensure the best services for youth.

Finally, we support HB 4087 which would bring Michigan in line with over 30 states across the political spectrum in allowing unaccompanied minors the ability to consent to vital,

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