



HOUSE of REPRESENTATIVES

STATE OF MICHIGAN

Appropriations Requests for Legislatively Directed Spending Items

1. The sponsoring representative's first name:
Sharon
2. The sponsoring representative's last name:
MacDonell
3. The cosponsoring representatives' names. All cosponsors must be listed. If none, please type 'n/a.' A signed letter from the sponsor approving the co-sponsorship and a signed letter from the member wishing to co-sponsor are required. Attach letters at question #9 below.
N/A
4. Name of the entity that the spending item is intended for:
The Arc Michigan
5. Physical address of the entity that the spending item is intended for:
517-487-5426
6. If there is not a specific recipient, the intended location of the project or activity:
N/A
7. Name of the representative and the district number where the legislatively directed spending item is located:
Representative Kara Hope, 74th District
8. Purpose of the legislatively directed spending item. Please include how it provides a public benefit and why it is an appropriate use of taxpayer funding. Please also demonstrate that the item does not violate Article IV, S 30 of the Michigan Constitution.
Rep MacDonell is requesting \$1,000,000 in one-time funding to reinstate the Arc Michigan's Foster Care Disability Navigation Program. This program ran successfully in Michigan for a few years before its funding was cut out of the state's Fiscal Year 2025 budget.

The Arc Michigan is a non-profit disability advocacy organization specializing in children and adults with developmental disabilities. For nearly 75 years, the organization

has helped advance policies that have improved the well-being and independence of Michiganders with disabilities. The Arc's regional chapters throughout Michigan play a similar role at the local government level.

In the Foster Care Disability Navigation Program, children with disabilities in the foster care system are paired with a professional advocate who helps them understand their rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), secure education services, navigate the policies and procedures of special education, develop graduation plans, and more. Without a professional advocate working with them, many youth with disabilities in the foster care system are unaware of their right under IDEA to free and appropriate public education.

While the high school graduation rate for youth in the foster care system is much lower than that of their peers outside the system, the rate is even lower for the subset of youth in the system with diagnosed or suspected disabilities. Investing \$1 million in the Foster Care Navigation Program would more than pay for itself, increasing educational outcomes for youth with disabilities in foster care and giving them a chance at a decent life. For more information about this request, please see the document attached to this submission.

9. Attach documents here if needed:

Attachments added to the end of this file.

10. The amount of state funding requested for the legislatively directed spending item.

1000000

11. Has the legislatively directed spending item previously received any of the following types of funding? Check all that apply.

["State"]

12. Please select one of the following groups that describes the entity requesting the legislatively directed spending item:

Non-profit organization

13. For a non-profit organization, has the organization been operating within Michigan for the preceding 36 months?

Yes

14. For a non-profit organization, has the entity had a physical office within Michigan for the preceding 12 months?

Yes

15. For a non-profit organization, does the organization have a board of directors?

Yes

16. For a non-profit organization, list all the active members on the organization's board of directors and any other officers. If this question is not applicable, please type 'n/a.'

Board of Directors, Executive Committee: President Thomas F. Kendziorski, Vice President Ron Kimball, Secretary Mark McWilliams, Treasurer Andrea Lane, Past President Maria Messina Wiersma, MCE Representative Dawn Calnen. Directors at Large: Zachary Cardinell, Phyllis Clark, Theresa Ryan, Jamie Junior, Katherine Mills, Robert Steinkamp, and Robert White.

17. "I certify that neither the sponsoring representative nor the sponsoring representative's staff or immediate family has a direct or indirect pecuniary interest in the legislatively directed spending item."

Yes, this is correct

18. Anticipated start and end dates for the legislatively directed spending item:

Anticipated start date: 9/28/2025. Anticipated end date: 9/26/2026

19. "I hereby certify that all information provided in this request is true and accurate."

Yes

Request to Reinstate Foster Care Disability Navigation Funding

Our Ask:

We are asking the State of Michigan to reinstate funding for the Foster Care Disability Navigation (FCDN) program that addresses the educational needs of students experiencing foster care who have disabilities. **We are asking for a \$1 million on-going appropriation to The Arc Michigan to continue providing navigation services and external educational case management support through its network of advocates around the state.** This funding request is aligned with [recommendations](#) that came out of a MDHHS work group that included MDE, private agencies, advocates, and those with lived experience.

Background:

\$2 million was allocated by the Michigan Legislature in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 budget in response to the abysmal graduation rates of youth experiencing foster care. The Arc Michigan's network of local Arc chapters provides a unique opportunity to provide these special education advocacy services in local regions spanning across the state. Our advocates provide intensive support that helps youth understand their rights and options, secure needed education services in school, navigate special education, develop graduation plans, connect to credit recovery, decrease suspensions, expulsions and dropout, and increase achievement. Additionally, The Arc Michigan collaborates with the Student Advocacy Center of Michigan to provide intakes and technical assistance, due to their experience working with this population for more than 30 years.

This program was modeled after external case management programs such as Treehouse. The state of Washington invested \$12 million (2022) in Treehouse, a human service organization that provides education advocacy, mentoring and other academic supports to youth experiencing foster care. Where they have achieved a long-term 4-year student graduation rate of 75%, significantly surpassing their state's overall 4-year high school graduation rate of 53%.

We estimate that **more than 6,100 young people** would be eligible for these services.

Need for This Program:

1. Increase academic support for students with disabilities in the foster care system.

- The elimination of Education Planners and pandemic learning loss is creating a need for more support and oversight for these students to ensure they are not falling through the cracks.
- Education outcomes for students with disabilities in the foster care system are at a greater disadvantage without the support of an advocate who can help navigate and

inform students of their rights under Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of The Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

2. Helps Michigan achieve its goal of increasing graduation rates for students experiencing foster care.

- Only 41% of students experiencing foster care graduated in 4 years in 2022 (26% dropped out), compared to 81% statewide. This is [much lower than national rates](#).

Our Impact:

- The first year of the program (FY23) focused on extensive outreach (7,000 reached personally with 201,489 pieces of literature distributed), training, and building up infrastructure to scale the program where 80 youth were served (December '22-September '23).
- In FY24, we served an additional 111 youth and reached an additional 11,000 in outreach. **Totaling in 191 students supported through FCDN.**
- Since inception, our advocates have **received over 3,000 calls and counting** for assistance from both youth, foster parents, and providers.
- Through survey data collected, 100% of respondents reported being satisfied with their FCDN advocacy and that they would recommend the service to others.

We are asking the legislature to allocate \$1,000,000.00 to The Arc Michigan, a 74 year-old nonprofit, community-based organization organized under the laws of this state. The mission of the Arc Michigan is to ensure that individuals with disabilities are valued in order that they and their families can fully participate in and contribute to their community, to provide supports for special education system navigation, and to improve educational outcomes for youth in foster care who have a diagnosed disability or suspected disability. Foster care youth also includes youth pursuing Young Adult Voluntary Foster Care, those who are recently adopted (within 1 year), CPS Abuse and Neglect Cases, and those in kinship care.

Sincerely,



Sherri Boyd, Executive Director
Arc Michigan



Peri Stone-Palmquist, Executive Director The
Student Advocacy Center of Michigan