

Michigan Coalition of Children and Families

Sample Candidate Forum Questions – ELECTION 2010

I. Health

Respite care services for families of children with severe emotional disturbance (SED) have been reduced putting these children at risk of hospitalization. Would you support redirecting funds from costly institutionalization to prevention?

The appropriation of mental health services for persons without insurance has been flat for 20 years. Consequently, families have had extreme difficulties accessing public mental health services for children. What would you do about this?

Federal Center for Disease Control funds for lead poisoning will end in 2010. What role should the state play in identifying children with lead poisoning and eliminating lead hazards in housing?

Infant Mortality funding has been cut in the Dept. of Community Health budget. Michigan's infant mortality rate ranked 40th among the 50 states, according to the latest KIDS COUNT data book (with #1 being the best). How would you prioritize the existing funds be used to combat infant mortality?

The number of children enrolled in Medicaid is growing because their parents have lost jobs, which often provided their health insurance. This past year physicians absorbed an 8% reimbursement cut, which severely impacts access to pediatric primary care. Are you supportive of limiting further cuts in reimbursements for primary care?

What is your position on public and private health care plans providing coverage for mental health, developmental disabilities, and substance abuse at parity with other illnesses?

To prevent unintended pregnancy, family planning should be added to the list of basic health services that are, by statute, available to all Michigan residents regardless of age or income level. Do you agree and why or why not?

Do you think the legislature should invest in a continuum of coordinated school health services, including school-based health centers, MI Model Health Curriculum and certified school nurses?

With obesity in children rising to epidemic proportions, would you support improved nutritional standards for school lunches?

II. Education

Early childhood and out of school time education are proven to be good investments in a child's future. How will you support programs that support both early childhood and out of school time education? How will you fund these programs without taking away from other important social services safety net programs?

A recent study among forty Michigan school districts revealed that African-American youth are far more likely than their white peers to be suspended, expelled, or arrested for the same kind of conduct at school. This leads to an increased likelihood of entrance into the juvenile justice system. What specific actions do you believe could be taken by the educational system to address this disparity?

III. Safety

Do you agree that providing educational pre-kindergarten care, after-school programs, interventions for troubled kids, and child abuse and neglect prevention services will significantly reduce crime and violence over time?

Prevention programs can save taxpayers up to \$17 for every \$1 invested, primarily in the form of reduced spending on prisons, delinquency, and high school drop outs.[1] Yet the FY 2010 budget included cuts to pre-school, home-visiting, nurse-family partnership, and other child abuse prevention programs by an estimated 12 percent. What priorities would you support to restore funding for prevention, and how would you propose funding them

IV. Economic Security

The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) is a refundable tax credit on income taxes and, as described by the Anderson Economic Group (in a study commissioned by the Michigan Association of United Ways and the Community Economic Development Association of Michigan), "is widely considered the most effective program for helping families work their way out of poverty. Increasing participation in EITC by 1% in

Michigan would generate an additional \$3.3 million in new economic activity."

Should the state of Michigan support efforts to increase low-wage worker participation in the EITC program?

V. Revenue/Structural Deficit

The state has had a budget gap since 2001 and faces another significant deficit in the fiscal year 2011 budget, scheduled to begin on October 1st. In recent years, deep, painful cuts have been made across the budget, including programs that affect children and families. Several solutions, including extending the sales tax to most services and adopting a graduated income tax structure have been suggested. What strategies would you support to provide a more stable revenue source and to protect services and programs?

Tax expenditures (such as tax exemptions and tax credits) continue to rise annually and are projected to amount to about \$36 billion this year. This is revenue that is not collected by the state and is therefore not available to fund services and programs. Currently, there is no process requiring the regular review of these tax expenditures, which are really a form of "silent spending." Do you support a regular review of tax expenditures to determine their effectiveness and eliminating tax expenditures that do not serve a public purpose?