

March 23, 2021

Dear Legislator –

We are police chiefs, sheriffs and prosecutors who are members of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, a group of law enforcement leaders who advocate for programs to help kids succeed. Our members have consistently asked the state legislature to pursue smart investments in youth that will benefit our communities by reducing crime, setting kids up for success, and saving taxpayer dollars. Over the past year, we have seen the COVID pandemic greatly exacerbate the challenges facing children and their families. It has highlighted the need for investments like high-quality child care, home visiting programs, and afterschool and out-of-school time care programs. Whether it be providing learning opportunities to nourish brain development, helping parents get back to work, mentoring new parents, or making sure that kids are being productive and staying out of trouble during the afterschool hours, we encourage state legislators to make smart investments for proven programs that will benefit our kids for life. That's good for taxpayers and great for public safety.

We, the undersigned law enforcement leaders, therefore urge you to consider the following crime-prevention priorities as part of the passage of the FY21 supplemental budget and when negotiating the Fiscal Year 2022 budget.

1. Child care – particularly for infants and toddlers - is important for setting kids up for success and as a support for working families. Yet, Michigan's child care system did not meet the needs of families who struggle to both access care and afford it when it's available. Infant care in a center averages \$10,287 per year, nearly the cost for public college tuition. Additionally, nearly half of Michigan's population live in a child care desert and only half of children eligible for subsidies are currently in care. Infant and toddler child care is especially important because it's a critical time for brain development and lays the foundation for later learning.

- **Currently, child care reimbursement rates fail to provide adequate pay for providers.** The current financing system for child care is not sustainable because it does not cover providers' actual costs, or ensure adequate wages for child care workers. *Provider reimbursement rate increases and payment reforms could remedy this.*

- **Many of our most disadvantaged families do not qualify for state-supported quality care due to low eligibility rates for subsidies.** Michigan's eligibility threshold is one of the lowest in the country. *Increasing it to 200% of poverty would expand eligibility to almost 150,000 more children statewide.*

2. Home visiting programs provide parents of young children with coaching, support, and resources that lead to safer outcomes. Some programs, like the Nurse Family Partnership (NFP) have been shown to reduce child abuse and neglect and reduce crime in the long-run. They also lead to better health outcomes and therefore save money in the long-run. There are eight types of home visiting programs in Michigan, including NFP. They help Michigan parents to succeed so that their kids will as well. *\$7.3 million in state funding would expand evidence-based home visiting program slots to 1,000 new families with children born at-risk of substance abuse.*

3. High-quality afterschool and summer learning programs have a proven record of lowering crime, improving behavior and increasing academic success. As we look to recover from the COVID-19 crisis, out-of-school programs will be essential to reopening and can help children catch up, be productive, and stay out of trouble. Utilizing supplemental funds for direct relief to these programs and then further expanding funding for these programs in both the FY21 and FY22 budget could be very impactful. *However, funding must be directed to out-of-school-time programming immediately so that summer programs can be ready and accessible to students when we will need them the most. If legislators sought to grow funding to a level that would ensure access for students statewide, projections show that it would cost at least \$60 million.*

Rather than waiting to arrest, prosecute, and incarcerate more people, we should invest early in solutions that can prevent crime now. We hope the legislature will consider these outcomes when making important budget decisions now and as they deliberate the FY22 budget. Thank you for your hard work on behalf of Michigan's children and families.

Sincerely,

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