



GIVE KIDS THE KEYS TO A STRONG FUTURE

"We need to find ways to empower youth."

-Niral, Muskegon

THE ROAD AHEAD

To support youth and help them thrive regardless of race, place or family income, Michigan must:



Raise the Age of juvenile jurisdiction from 17 to 18.



Address the health needs of young people, including sexual education, safety and mental health.



Provide support for young parents and youth aging out of the foster system.



TIME FOR A TUNE-UP

Overall, Michigan's youth are increasingly graduating from high school and fewer are becoming parents as teenagers. However, a large number are not prepared for college or career training and access to postsecondary opportunities is more limited. **If our state is to prosper, we must invest in youth.** Michigan youth need to be healthy—both physically and mentally—and prepared to transition into adulthood with support from caring adults and assistance with education, housing and employment. Policymakers must also focus their efforts to support justice-involved youth, those aging out of the foster care system, and young parents.



ABOUT THE OWNER'S MANUAL

We all agree Michigan needs a major tune up. And like the real vehicles we all depend on, it takes a lot of components and tools to make our state go. Without good jobs and training, reliable healthcare, quality education, strong families, and a safe environment, our state can't run properly. That's why we've created a clear and comprehensive plan to help lawmakers on the road ahead—the Owner's Manual for Michigan.

REPAIRING THE PROBLEM:



HOW TO SUPPORT YOUNG PEOPLE IN MICHIGAN

- 1. Raise the age of juvenile jurisdiction.** Michigan remains one of four states to automatically charge 17-year-olds as adults in the criminal justice system regardless of the crime. This prevents justice-involved youth from accessing age-appropriate treatment and services in the juvenile justice system. Instead they are sent into a system—including jail and prison sentences—that was created for adults. Youth prosecuted as adults are more likely to reoffend than their peers in the juvenile justice system. Plus, carrying an adult criminal record acts as a barrier to good jobs, education, housing and more. Raising the age is good for public safety, the economy and for young people.
- 2. Address the health needs of young people.** While teen birth rates are on the decline, U.S. rates are still among the highest of industrialized countries, and Michigan is experiencing a slight rise in teen mothers having additional children before reaching adulthood. Michigan does not mandate that schools provide comprehensive and inclusive sexual education; instead, schools opt-in if they choose to offer it. However, state policy could reverse the process to allow for an opt-out provision. Additionally, with recent trends showing increases in teen deaths, policies need to address both suicide prevention and violence among youth. Expanded access to mental health services should be available to all youths.
- 3. Provide adequate support for young parents and youth aging out of foster care.** Young parents between the ages of 15-24 face a number of barriers as they learn to become parents, yet are still in need of support as they transition into adulthood. Teen parents under 18 encounter unique issues, such as not being old enough to sign a lease to secure housing. Completing school, postsecondary education, and training and finding gainful employment are also difficult. Youth aging out of foster care face similar hurdles in education, housing and employment. They also have a higher likelihood of becoming parents as young adults. Michigan underinvests in support services to help these two groups of young people and should expand funding for programs like the Michigan Adolescent Pregnancy and Parenting Program (MI-APPP) and independent living services.

SHARING THE ROAD

Equity is of utmost importance when it comes to building a better Michigan. Michigan's young people are struggling with a number of challenges. Youth of color, however, experience disparate outcomes, pointing to the need for systemic policy changes to address equity. In the justice and foster care systems, kids of color are overrepresented. Higher rates of teen deaths and teen births exist. To improve outcomes for all youth, policies need to be centered in equity and inclusion. Youth, particularly from marginalized communities, should be heard and included in decision-making. For our state's future workforce, economy and well-being, we must invest in young people to ensure that they are successful adults.



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