



TO: Members of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Health and Human Services and the Department of Health and Human Services  
FROM: Gilda Z. Jacobs, President & CEO  
SUBJECT: 2021 Budget Recommendations  
DATE: March 9, 2020

I am pleased to share the priorities of the Michigan League for Public Policy for the 2021 Health and Human Services budget. The League and its local partners around the state believe that meaningful investments in programs that improve the health and wellbeing of all Michigan residents is critical to achieving economic growth and opportunity in our state.

Fact sheets are attached with additional information related to the League's priorities, which are highlighted below.

- **Protect state and federal funding for healthcare coverage for all Michiganders.** Medicaid covers 50% of Michiganders with a disability, 40% of Michigan children and 60% of Michigan residents living in a nursing home. And, since 2014, more than 1 million adults in Michigan have received healthcare coverage through the Healthy Michigan Plan. The League supports continued state funding for Medicaid, Healthy Michigan and the Children's Health Insurance Program as well as the governor's recommendation to expand the MIDocs medical residency program and enhanced payment rates for Medicaid outpatient hospital care. These investments are likely to improve access to important health services in rural and underserved communities.
- **Support maternal and infant health.** Maternal and infant health outcomes are good measures of a state's priorities. The governor's budget proposal prioritizes investments to improve such outcomes, including funding to provide 12 weeks of paid parental leave for state employees and increased funding for home visiting and family planning services. We urge you to support the governor's recommendation to invest \$37.5 million to establish Healthy Moms, Healthy Babies.
- **Protect Michiganders from environmental health threats.** State spending on public health has not kept pace with growing health concerns, leaving Michigan ill-prepared to address current threats and future crises. The League supports an increase in public health funding to rebuild local health departments' capacity to investigate child lead poisoning cases and ensure they can respond effectively to water contamination by per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), which have contaminated public water drinking supplies serving more than 1.5 million Michigan residents. We support the governor's recommendation to provide \$10 million to establish a Lead Poisoning Prevention Fund.
- **Reinstate the Family Independence Program (FIP) hardship exemption.** In 2011, Michigan eliminated the federal hardship exemption that allows states to continue to extend cash assistance benefits beyond the 60-month limit to 20% of its caseload. Previously, the exemption was targeted to residents living in a county where unemployment was 10% or more or there were few job opportunities. Currently, there are still many Michigan counties with an

unemployment rate of 6% or more and where job opportunities are hard to come by. Coupled with Michigan's strict lifetime limit, FIP's reach is restricted, and we recommend reinstating the hardship exemption to provide income assistance to more families with dependent children.

- **Eliminate the drug felony ban on food or cash assistance for individuals with more than one felony conviction.** Drug felonies comprised 28% of all felony convictions in Michigan in 2017, meaning that upon release, thousands of Michiganders with multiple convictions are prevented from receiving supplementary income that not only supports their children and families but also has been demonstrated to reduce recidivism. We urge the state to align its policies with that of 26 states that have entirely eliminated the drug felony ban for food assistance and 18 states that have done so for cash assistance.

We hope the attached information is helpful as you deliberate a budget that touches thousands of Michigan families and children. We look forward to working with you as the budget process proceeds.