



Michigan Association
of Community and
Adult Education



Public policy
in the best interest
of children

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Boosting Parents' Literacy to Help Children's Education is Focus of Michigan's Children FamilySpeak on Oct. 28, 2015 in Lansing

LANSING, MI – Parents who have been able to better assist their kids' education by building their own literacy and other skills will address lawmakers and policymakers at a special Michigan's Children FamilySpeak forum next week.

Michigan's Children is working with the Michigan Association of Community and Adult Education to bring parents and caregivers of young children together with state Lawmakers at **10 a.m., Wednesday, October 28, 2015**. The forum will illustrate how greater investments in families can move forward improvements in Michigan's 3rd grade literacy. The forum takes place inside the **Speaker's Library in the State Capitol**.

- The solutions-focused forum includes testimony from parents from **10 a.m. until 11:30 a.m.**
- Lawmakers and policy-makers will pose questions to families from **11:30 a.m. to noon**.
- Media will have an additional opportunity to talk families and providers that serve them at an informal lunch from noon to 1 p.m.

With 3rd grade literacy a key focus for reforming Michigan's education system by Gov. Rick Snyder and state legislative leadership, child and family advocates say progress depends on parents being able to assist in their children's learning. Strong evidence and research consistently shows parents' education is linked to children's own educational success, yet reading barriers continue to exist for many parents to best support their children's literacy needs. A small amount of funding to support adult education was included in the 2016 state budget, but that limited investment follows years of disinvestment in basic skill-building programs for parents.

"When 42,000 Michiganders ages 18-34 have less than a ninth grade education, an assumption cannot be made about parents' ability to engage in their children's learning," said Michele Corey, Vice President for Programs at Michigan's Children, the independent public policy group working on behalf of all children in the state. "After all, the child's first school is the home, and their first teachers are their parents and caregivers."

Among those testifying will be April Flores, 35, a Redford Township mother of four who earned a high school diploma nearly 20 years after dropping out of school. While she worked cleaning hotel rooms and attending an adult program at Novi Public Schools, Flores spent evenings doing her homework along side her children. Her growing confidence in subjects like algebra and essay writing enabled her to help her children with their schoolwork. Today all – mom and kids -- are college bound.

“I worked hard for that diploma, and I told my kids, you can do it too,” Flores said.

MACAE President Bob Steeh said there must be a priority to invest in the education of thousands of Michigan illiterate adults to better support family well-being and education. By providing opportunities to increase their reading and math proficiency through adult education, adults who earn high-school diplomas and GEDs stand a better chance of sustainable employment.

“If we do not make educating these parents a priority, we are not breaking the cycle of poverty. We must invest in these adults by providing opportunities to increase their reading and math proficiency. In doing so, they find sustainable employment. Without a high school diploma or GED credential, these adults are the first to be laid off,” Steeh added.

The Michigan Association of Community and Adult Education works to provide a cohesive framework for community education through collaboration and guidance at the local, state and federal level. MACAE’s vision is to engage in partnerships, provide member support and advocate for lifelong learning, leading to employment and self-sufficient families. For more information about MACAE, email macaeoffice@gmail.com, visit macae.org, or call 517-492-1367

Michigan’s Children is the only statewide independent voice working to ensure that public policies are made in the best interest of children from cradle to career and their families, with a specific focus on the needs of children, youth and families with the most challenges in their lives – children of color, children from low-income families, and children served by the foster and juvenile justice systems. For more information about Michigan’s Children, email mcorey@michiganschildren.org, or visit michiganschildren.org

FamilySpeak, modeled after Michigan’s Children’s signature KidSpeak® forums, mimics a traditional legislative committee hearing. Connecting the experiences of families directly with policymakers has provided firsthand knowledge of the challenges and opportunities and has proven to be an effective advocacy strategy. Their voices have changed the trajectory of policy conversation and have resulted in additional champions for parent-driven solutions in the Legislature, several Departments and other local policymaking bodies.