

# Fostering Success 2014 Summit

## Supporting Policies Affecting Youth and Alumni of Foster Care

May 16, 2014

Michigan's Children

[www.michiganschildren.org](http://www.michiganschildren.org)



*Public policy  
in the best interest  
of children.*

# Who We Are

- Michigan's Children is a statewide, independent voice for children and their families. We work with lawmakers, business leaders, and communities to build better public policy in the best interest of children, youth and families.
- We work to reduce disparities in child outcomes from cradle to career and believe that better public policy is built when those directly impacted by it are engaged with decision makers.

# Priority:

## Stable Paths to Adult Success

Ensuring that young people in the state's care are provided some stability in their educational careers.  
Current policy areas:

- School Discipline Practices
- Second and Third Chance Programs
- Adult, Community and Post-Secondary Education for the most Challenged Youth
- Robust Transition Services

# Public Policy In Context

- Growing child, youth and family poverty
  - High unemployment for young adults
- Growing abuse and neglect
- Minimal movement in education outcomes
- Minimal movement in health outcomes
- Some public programs growing to meet needs
  - Federal support more tenuous
- Others woefully lacking
- Poor outcomes across the board for kids involved with the foster care and juvenile justice systems

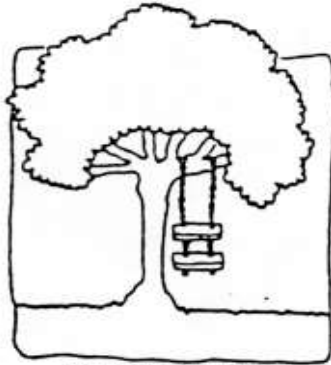
# Why the Disconnect?

- Lots of competition for fewer dollars
  - Deficit budget in Michigan for more than a decade
  - Recent revenue bright spots resulting in challenge and opportunity/More recent bad news
  - Federal fiscal and operational challenges
- Ideology about the role of government
  - Polarization of the parties
- Policy makers don't hear about issues of concern

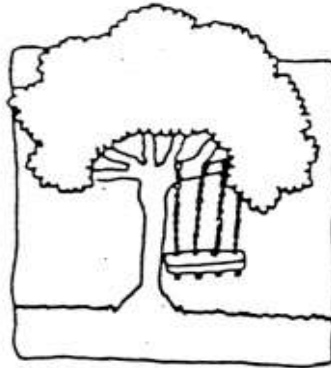
# That's Why You Need to Get Involved/Why Advocacy

- You Should
  - There are things we want changed
  - Democracy=Responsibility
  - Decision-makers REALLY need our help to remove the disconnect
- You Can
  - You already have the skills you need
  - It doesn't take that many of us

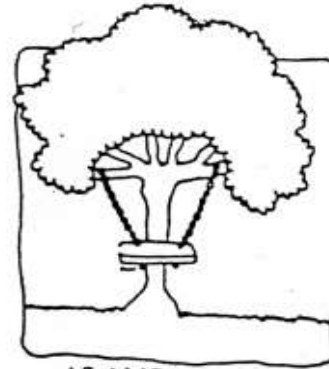
# How a Bill Becomes Law



AS INTRODUCED



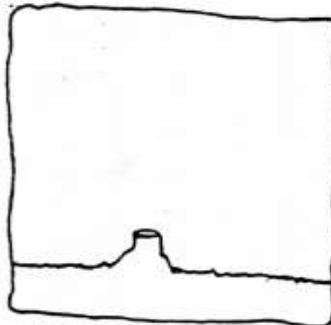
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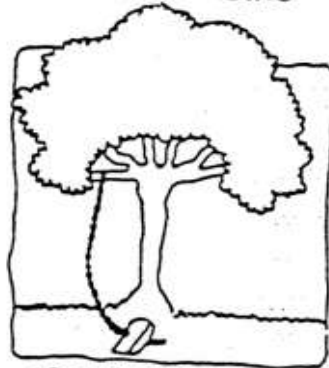
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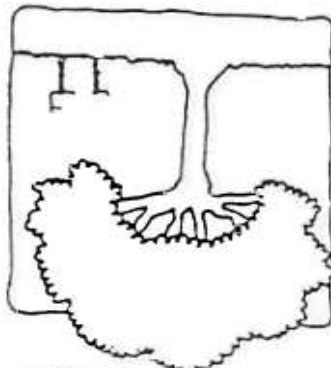
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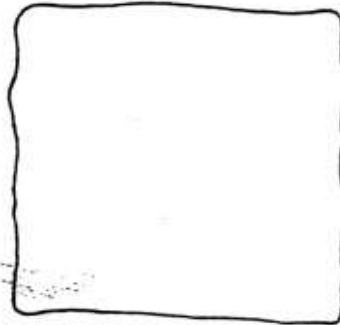
AS FUNDED BY JOINT  
BUDGET COMMITTEE



AS IMPLEMENTED BY  
THE STATE AGENCY



AS REPORTED BY THE  
MEDIA



AS UNDERSTOOD BY  
THE PUBLIC



WHAT WAS ACTUALLY  
NEEDED

# Building an Advocacy Strategy: Becoming a Stronger Voice for Your Concerns

- WHAT are the changes that matter
- Getting the attention of the people who can make the changes that we want
  - WHO can make those changes
  - HOW to get them to listen – what influences them
- Who and What Do We Know
- Who and What Do We Need



# Policymakers Need To Know What We Know

- We Know the Problems
- We Know What Works
- We Know What Doesn't Work
- We Are Experts in Life and Work
- Solution as important as the problem

# What Are the Changes That Matter?

- What do policymakers need to know about young people themselves?
  - How can we get that information
- What do policymakers need to know about how programs work or don't work?
  - Maybe they work for some people but not others
  - Maybe they used to work but don't anymore
  - Maybe they are based on the wrong information about what matters

# Opportunities in 2014

## State Budget Discussions

- Decisions being made NOW
- Connecting with changes still being considered
- Increasing opportunities outside school hours
- Better support for students at risk
- Support for dropout prevention and recovery
- Access to health services for adolescents
- Services to youth in foster care
- Services to youth in juvenile justice
- Building school/community partnerships
- Expanding college access

# Opportunities in 2014

- School Justice Summit Follow up
- MDE Dropout Prevention and Equity Focus
- Race Equity Coalition (CPS/FC/JJ) Work
- Statewide Truancy Definition
- School Discipline Policy Recommendations
- ELECTIONS
- Other opportunities?

# Opportunities in 2014

## Federal Activities

- Child Sex Trafficking
  - Over 20 bills introduced
- Psycotropic
- President's initiative
- Adoption Incentives
  - Bills stalled
- Housing Reform
  - Concern but minimal movement
- Education Issues – Unlikely...

# Advocacy= Bringing Influence to Bear

How Do We Influence Decision  
Makers?

# What Influences You?

# What Influences Decision Makers

- Friends
- Title or position
- Information
- Numbers
- Constituents
- Money



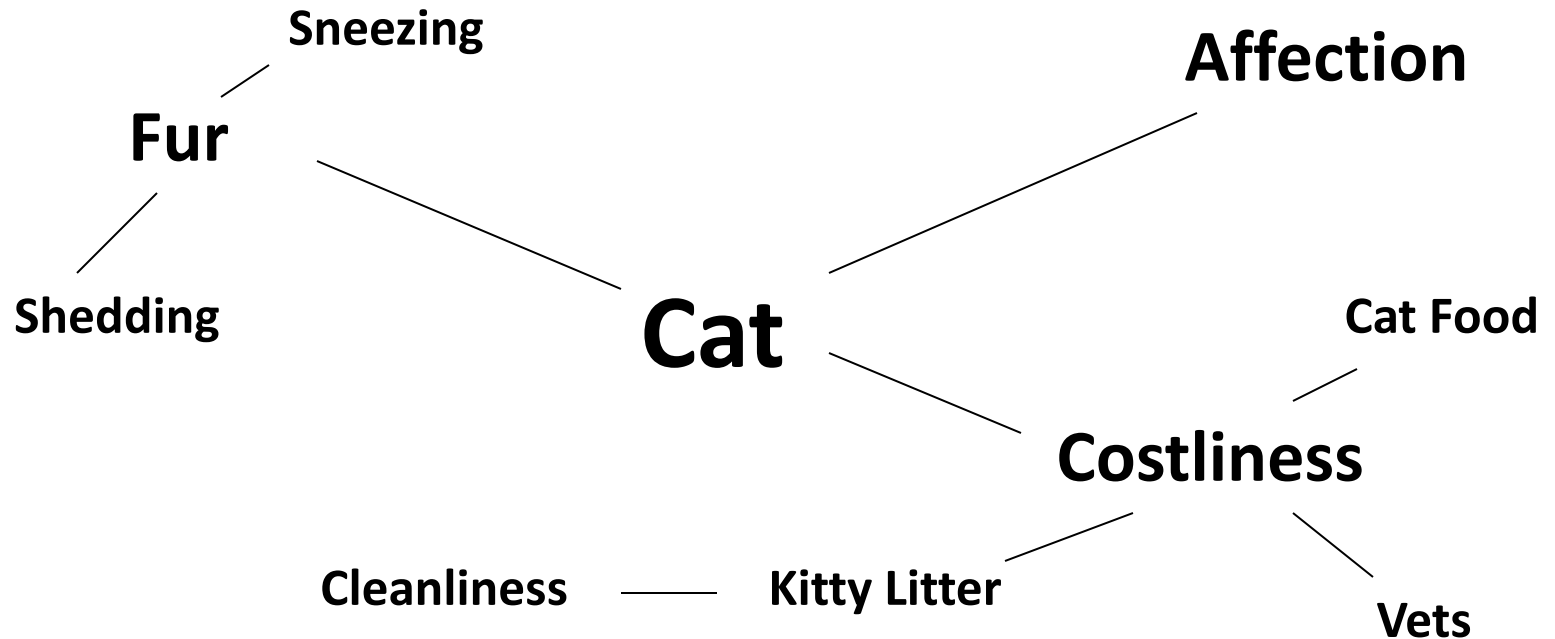
“When you need a friend, it’s too late to make one.”

Mark Twain

# How Do We Get Them to Listen?

- We use mental shortcuts to make sense of the world
- Based on our life experiences, including the media
- We use “frames” to filter new information

# Cat Frame



# Why Do Frames Matter?

When the facts don't fit the frame, it is the **FACTS** that are rejected, not the frame.

# How To Find Their Frame

- **Get to Know Them!**
- Simple Research
- Paying Attention
- TALK TO THEM

# Giving Our Solutions The Best Chance

- What do we need to do before talking with policymakers?
- Who would be good partners to engage?
- Who might be the best messengers?

# Always Keep the Door Open

- If they don't do what you want...
  - Can you blame them? Did they know what you know?
  - Express disappointment, but look for other possibilities
- If all else fails...
  - Don't get angry
  - Get a better person elected/appointed/hired

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