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November 11, 2021

Michigan Legislature
Lansing, MI 48911

Dear Sir or Madam,

Since 1973, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) has partnered with private, non-profit agencies to provide emergency shelter and crisis intervention services to runaway and homeless youth and young adults ages 12-21 and their families in Counties across Michigan. The statewide network known as the Michigan Network for Youth and Families (MNYF) represents 19 agencies that provide these vital services to youth and families.

Michigan's runaway and homeless youth programs are among the most successful in the nation due to our history of positive outcomes, the collaboration of MNYF agencies, and the agencies' commitment to homeless and at-risk youth. Last year, **95% of the youth discharged from our shelters were reunified with their families and 88% were enrolled in an educational program.**

For the past 20 years, MNYF has advocated for an increase in funding to provide services to one of the most vulnerable populations in our state, homeless youth. In 2019, our agencies were granted a modest \$500,000 funding increase to be shared amongst 19 agencies. Although grateful for the increase, agencies continue to operate on budget deficits. This year, MNYF requested that a \$3 million increase in funding be considered in the FY22 budget. Unfortunately, this request was not granted and agencies are, once again, asked to continue to provide emergency shelter and crisis intervention to homeless youth with insufficient resources.

Over the past 18 months, runaway and homeless youth shelters across our State have continued to provide safe shelter and crisis intervention to homeless and vulnerable youth despite the significant increase in operation costs due to pandemic guidelines, increased youth needs, and dramatically rising instability of essential staffing. MNYF is requesting an opportunity to access a work project of \$20 million of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds total to spend over the next three years to:

- Fund **capital improvement** projects specifically for our youth emergency shelters and transitional living programs. Many of the agencies that serve runaway and homeless youth operate out of older buildings that require a higher level of maintenance. Agencies that had funds designated for capital improvements were forced to use these funds to cover additional expenses needed to respond to the coronavirus pandemic. Additionally, state

and federal grants, which are the primary source of funding for these agencies, do not allow for such costs.

- **Increase staff retention** through payroll incentives and professional development. Offering staff free training on evidence-based interventions enhances staff recruitment efforts, incentivizes current staff, and increases positive outcomes for youth and families.

MNYF is asking for your support to help us strengthen the safety net for our homeless youth and families in crisis.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Benjamin R. Moe". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Benjamin Moe

Board President, Michigan Network for Youth & Families