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TO: The Honorable Detroit City Council

FROM: David Whitaker, Director 
Legislative Policy Division Staff

DATE: April 10, 2024

RE: **RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING APRIL AS CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH**

Council Member Angela Whitfield-Calloway requested that the Legislative Policy Division (LPD) provide a resolution recognizing April as Child Abuse Prevention Month.

Please contact our office if we can be of any further assistance.

BY COUNCIL MEMBER ANGELA WHITFIELD-CALLOWAY

RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING APRIL AS CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH

- WHEREAS,** All children deserve to have safe, stable, nurturing homes and communities that foster their healthy growth and development; and
- WHEREAS,** Children are the most vulnerable segment of society, and it is the responsibility of everyone to protect them from physical, emotional, and sexual abuse; and
- WHEREAS,** In 2022, there were 558,899 victims of child abuse and neglect nationally, with 23,500 in Michigan according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services;¹ and
- WHEREAS,** Childhood abuse and neglect exposes children to cascading and long-term negative effects on their mental and physical health. According to the National Institutes of Health, “[c]hildren who have experienced abuse and neglect are therefore at increased risk for a number of problematic developmental, health, and mental health outcomes, including learning problems (e.g. problems with inattention and deficits in executive functions), problems relating to peers (e.g. peer rejection), internalizing symptoms (e.g., depression, anxiety), externalizing symptoms (e.g., oppositional defiant disorder, conduct disorder, aggression), and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). As adults, these children continue to show increased risk for psychiatric disorders, substance use, serious medical illnesses, and lower economic productivity;” and
- WHEREAS,** Child neglect, in particular, is highly correlated with poverty. That is not to say that people experiencing poverty are more likely to abuse their children, but rather that poverty often creates significant household stress and an inability to access resources to fulfill a child’s basic needs; and
- WHEREAS,** Child neglect resulting from poverty conditions is entirely preventable but requires a holistic effort to support families that includes increased investment in programs like child care subsidies, enhanced primary medical care, affordable housing programs, food subsidies, and afterschool programs; and
- WHEREAS,** As part of an effort to help identify and prevent child abuse, every child and member of the public should be aware of the “Hand Signal for Distress.” The signal is simple: start with an open hand, palm facing out, then cross the thumb over the palm and close the fingers to form a fist.”² A child can use this signal to discretely signal others that they are in danger and that they need help; and
- WHEREAS,** As children increasingly spend their time online, there must be a coordinated effort to educate parents and children on potential risks in order to avoid child exploitation, abuse, and exposure to inappropriate content; and
- WHEREAS,** Effective child abuse prevention strategies require partnerships between citizens, community agencies, faith communities, medical facilities, elected leaders, schools, civic organizations, law enforcement agencies, and the business community; and

¹ [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Child Maltreatment 2022 Report](#)

² [Photo and video of the hand signal at libbychildsafety.com](#)

WHEREAS, The Detroit City Council reaffirms its Charter mandated commitment “to the development and welfare of our youth, our most precious treasure...”; **NOW THEREFORE BE IT**

RESOLVED, The Detroit City Council hereby declares April as Child Abuse Prevention Month; **NOW BE IT FINALLY**

RESOLVED, That the City Clerk provide a copy of this resolution to the Michigan Public Health Institute, Prevent Child Abuse Michigan, the Governor’s Task Force on Child Abuse & Neglect, Kids-TALK Children’s Advocacy Center, and Toni McMorris, author of “Good Secrets and Bad Secrets with Libby the Lizard.”