

Biography of Ismael Ahmed

Ismael Ahmed was appointed by Gov. Jennifer M. Granholm as director of the Michigan Department of Human Services (DHS) effective Sept. 10, 2007. A nationally-recognized expert in immigration and social reform, Mr. Ahmed leads the state's second largest agency. DHS's nearly 10,000 employees administer a \$4 billion-plus annual budget serving 1.5 million medical assistance cases and 1.2 million cash and food assistance cases.



During his tenure with DHS, Mr. Ahmed has implemented a variety of child welfare system reforms, including a consortium of Michigan Schools of Social Work to perform research and evaluate and train social workers; public-private partnerships to enhance child welfare services; and a task force dedicated to developing measurable outcomes for foster care, adoption, juvenile justice and homeless and runaway youth. In addition to negotiating a successful 2008 agreement with the Children's Rights organization, he has promoted new ways to help foster children "age out" of the system and has launched a statewide initiative to stem the effects of poverty in Michigan. As DHS director, he currently serves on the Michigan State Housing Development Authority board and as a member of the Early Childhood Investment Corporation's executive committee.

Mr. Ahmed co-founded the Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS) 36 years ago, and was appointed executive director in 1983 where he was responsible for overall operations of the organization to include the executive administration of the Arab American National Museum. ACCESS is the largest Arab-American human services organization in the United States, with affiliates in 11 states, offering over 90 different programs with more than 900,000 client contacts annually.

Under his leadership, ACCESS received the Exemplary Community Service Program Award from the state of Michigan. In addition, ACCESS received the Points of Light award, given by President George H.W. Bush in 1992 for an exemplary non-profit service. He has been named Director of the Year in 1992 by the United Way of Michigan.

For three consecutive years, Mr. Ahmed has been a guest speaker on U.S. and Arab relations at the Foreign Ministers Meeting of the League of Arab States. He has also been a contributing author to *Arabs in America: Myths and Reality* and has written for the Woodrow Wilson Foundation publication, *Arab American Political Participation in the United States*.

Ismael Ahmed has served on a number of governing boards for Southeast Michigan organizations, Eastern Michigan University's Board of Regents, Henry Ford Hospital, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, Association of Performing Arts Presenters, University of Michigan Citizens Advisory Board, United Way, and New Detroit The Coalition. He chaired the Immigration Task Force and the Cultural Exchange Network for New Detroit. He has also hosted multi-cultural music programs, one on Detroit's WDET Radio and two others on Detroit Public Schools Radio.

Mr. Ahmed is a 1975 graduate of the University of Michigan with a bachelor's degree in secondary education and a minor in sociology. He resides in Dearborn, Michigan with his wife Margaret and has five children and a grandson.