



MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF  
**LABOR & ECONOMIC  
OPPORTUNITY**

# 2022



# POVERTY TASK FORCE REPORT

Department of Labor and  
Economic Opportunity

Michiganders,

Reducing poverty in Michigan has been a top priority for Governor Gretchen Whitmer and I since assuming office. We established the Michigan Poverty Task Force in 2019, and I am proud to introduce our second Michigan Poverty Task Force report.

Following unprecedented collaboration between our dedicated Task Force members and state departments and agencies, we are releasing the enclosed recommendations. They include some of the boldest ideas presented to date that will lift Michiganders out of poverty, connect families in every corner of Michigan with economic opportunity, improve quality of life, improve outcomes and create real change.

Today, 1.4 million Michiganders fall below the federal poverty line, which is \$13,590 in earnings for single adults or \$27,750 in annual earnings for a family of four. And many more working families struggle to afford essentials, including housing, childcare, healthcare, transportation and education. That is why Governor Whitmer and I have made transformational investments to strengthen our middle class and uplift Michiganders. In our FY 2023 budget proposal, we proposed tripling the earned income tax credit for Michigan's working families, which would deliver an average combined refund of \$3,000 to more than 730,000 working families.

Our administration set the ambitious goal to build or preserve 75,000 affordable housing units across Michigan and enacted the Building Michigan Together Plan, which invests \$100 million in the state's housing trust fund, and helps 100,000 families stay in their homes through rental and mortgage assistance. According to Michigan State Housing Development Authority's "Ending Homelessness in Michigan" report, these actions reduced homelessness by 19% in 2020.

Boosting access to affordable childcare is crucial to helping parents find employment and escape poverty. Governor Whitmer and I have made a \$1.4 billion investment expanding access to low- or no-cost childcare, and helping childcare entrepreneurs throughout Michigan start and sustain their businesses. The Century Foundation estimates that these investments have ensured access to childcare to an additional 135,000 Michigan children.

Poverty is not limited to specific communities. We established Michigan's Office of Rural Development to coordinate investments in rural areas. As Lieutenant Governor, I have led our administration's work with a goal to connect every Michigan household to affordable high-speed internet. We established the Michigan High-Speed Internet Office to coordinate investments in high-speed internet. We also connected thousands more families and small business owners to affordable high-speed internet through the Building Michigan Together Plan, adding to the more than 18,000 homes we have connected.

We have also worked to boost economic opportunity throughout Michigan so that residents can secure good-paying jobs that will lift them out of poverty. We set the goal to get 60 percent of Michiganders a postsecondary degree or skills training certificate by 2030. The Futures for Frontliners, Michigan Reconnect and Going Pro programs are helping to make this a reality by providing tens of thousands of Michiganders with a tuition-free path to education and skills training.

The recommendations in this Michigan Poverty Task Force report chart a path for us to build on the progress we have made. I encourage you to read this report, because together, we can come closer than ever to eradicating poverty in Michigan, fostering economic opportunity for every Michigan family and creating prosperous and thriving communities in every part of our two peninsulas. Together, we can create real change and build a Michigan that is equitable and prosperous for everyone.

Sincerely,

*G. Gilchrist*

**Garlin Gilchrist II**

Lt. Governor, State of Michigan





A photograph of a man and a young girl. The man, with a beard and wearing a blue shirt, is lying down and looking up at the girl. The girl, with her hair in a bun and wearing a white shirt, is leaning over him and laughing. They are in a room with a brick wall and a lamp in the background.

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01.

## Task Force Objectives



**Among quality-of-life factors, one's health reigns supreme, even surpassing income in its primacy.** However, the connection between wealth and health outcomes is strong and undeniable. The COVID-19 crisis has brought into sharp focus the connections between wealth inequities and health inequities.

**Often, the connections are deadly.**

For example, life expectancy in the wealthy 48236 ZIP code of Grosse Pointe is 82 years, 13 years longer than life expectancy in Detroit's 48201 ZIP code just a few miles away.

Dr. Phillip Levy, chief innovation officer for Wayne Health, has developed geocoded mapping that examines how factors such as a scarcity of healthy food options, lack of access to health care, toxic stress and unemployment contribute to the dramatic disparities between neighboring communities.

Researchers like Levy, policymakers, insurance executives and other stakeholders are increasingly attuned to the fact that the most effective prescription for improving health outcomes is a commitment to addressing socioeconomic inequities. In recent years, Michigan state government officials have engaged in policymaking that acknowledges the importance of addressing social determinants of health in solving public health challenges.

**That recognition has manifested throughout state government:**

- **The 2022-2024 Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) Social Determinants of Health Strategy:**

MDHHS' Social Determinants of Health Strategy: Michigan's Roadmap to Healthy, Resilient Communities, takes a focused approach to align efforts at the state and local level for a greater impact in communities. The conditions and circumstances of peoples' lives, also known as the social determinants of health (SDOH), are known to greatly influence health outcomes. The 2022-2024 MDHHS Social Determinants of Health Strategy: Michigan's Roadmap to Healthy, Resilient Communities, is an iterative strategy.

It will continue to improve robust engagement, data analysis and environmental scans of national best practices. The strategy establishes focus areas and a framework for future efforts while detailing goals, objectives and policies and implementing actions that move Michigan toward a more holistic approach to improving health outcomes and advancing health equity.

**Life expectancy in the wealthy 48236 ZIP code of Grosse Pointe is 82 years, 13 years longer than life expectancy in Detroit's 48201 ZIP code just a few miles away.**



- **The Office of the Environmental Justice Public Advocate:**

With [Executive Order 2019-06](#), Gov. Gretchen Whitmer created the office of the environmental justice public advocate to serve as an external and internal advocate and catalyst for ensuring environmental justice throughout the state. Led by the environmental justice public advocate, the office works collaboratively across state government to advance environmental justice and equity in Michigan, as well as address environmental justice concerns and complaints.

- **Michigan Food Security Council:**

In recognition of the critical role that nutrition plays in sustaining health, Gov. Whitmer convened the Michigan Food Security Council that recently released its [final report](#) with 11 recommendations to boost food security in Michigan. The report estimates that food insecurity costs Michigan \$5.51 billion each year due to lost educational costs, lost productivity and lower lifetime earnings.

- **Michigan Coronavirus Racial Disparities Task Force:**

While African Americans represent approximately 14% of the state's population, they represented 40% of the Coronavirus 19 deaths in the early days of the crisis. With [Executive Order 2020-55](#), Gov. Whitmer established the Coronavirus Racial Disparities Task Force to act in an advisory capacity to the governor.

The task force was charged with studying the causes of racial health disparities and recommending actions to address the historical and systemic inequities.

Its most recent report, issued in February 2022, presents data and background information about the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on communities of color, details action steps the task force implemented to address the pandemic's racial disparities and recommends steps to address systemic racism in Michigan's health system.



According to the Michigan Association of United Ways' 2021 ALICE report, 38% of Michigan households – or 1.5 million people – struggle to afford necessities such as food, housing, child care, technology, health care and transportation. Between 2007 and 2019, the percentage of Michiganders who are asset limited, income constrained, employed (ALICE) – or the working poor – increased from 19% to 25%.

Gov. Whitmer created the Michigan Poverty Task Force (PTF) in 2019 with the goal of reducing poverty in Michigan. **The body is charged with:**

- Researching, identifying, recommending and implementing strategies for reducing poverty in Michigan
- Recommending changes in Michigan law and policy-related changes to fight poverty in Michigan
- Connecting and collaborating with the public and key stakeholders in carrying out this important work



**Between 2007 and 2019, the percentage of Michiganders who are asset limited, income constrained, employed – or the working poor – increased from 19% to 25%.**

The PTF released its first set of [policy recommendations in 2021](#). Many of the last report's recommendations centered on gaps in Michigan's social safety net. Several of that report's recommendations have been adopted or have gained significant momentum.

The PTF's 2022 report offers recommendations designed to address inequities that make some Michiganders both poorer and sicker than others. This report examines policy gaps that affect the health of struggling Michiganders and offers strategies with a focus on the social determinants of health and a goal of easing health inequities.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines social determinants of health as the nonmedical factors that influence health outcomes.

**According to the WHO, social determinants of health include:**

- Income and social protection
- Education
- Unemployment and job insecurity
- Working life conditions
- Food insecurity
- Early childhood development
- Social inclusion and nondiscrimination
- Access to affordable health services of decent quality
- Housing, basic amenities and the environment

Because both the causes of poverty and the social determinants of health emanate from a wide variety of sources, the PTF has leveraged the expertise of leaders from practically every state department to draft policy recommendations.

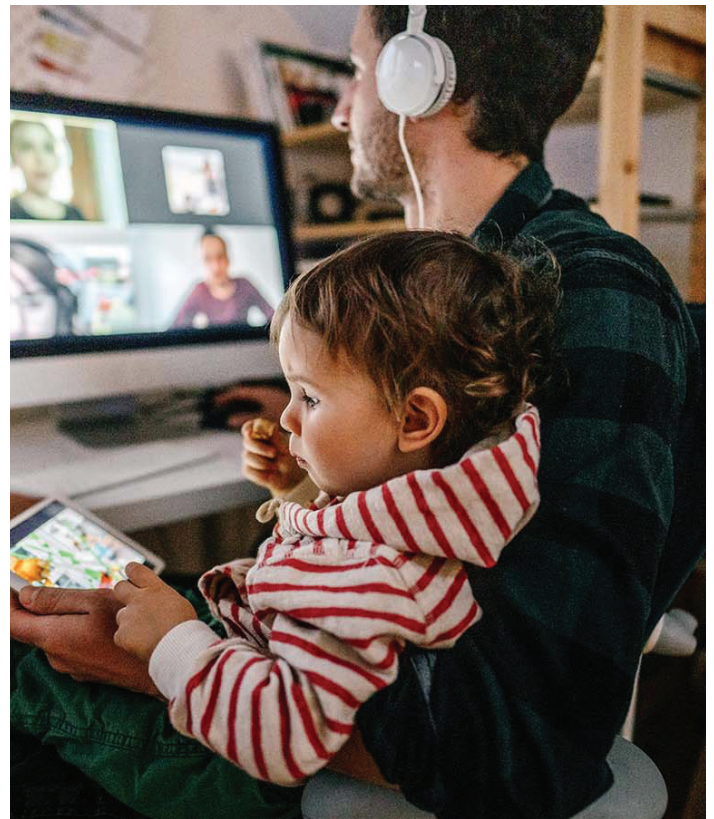


## Department directors have assigned subject experts to work in six PTF work groups:

- **Economic:** This committee focused on strategies that will help low-income Michiganders build wealth through entrepreneurship, homeownership, employment and training and other pathways.
- **Employment:** This committee considered strategies to help low-income Michiganders access training opportunities to prepare them for good jobs and to remove barriers to employment.
- **Benefits:** The committee examined current state policy and imagined pilots, priority shifts and administrative changes designed to streamline processes to give low-income Michiganders the resources and support they need to thrive.
- **Criminal Justice:** This committee examined the many ways engagement with the justice system is linked with barriers to economic mobility and explored strategies to untangle these links.
- **Education:** This committee targeted strategies to build educational equity to ensure that every K-12 student in Michigan is being prepared to succeed in postsecondary education or work and that at least 60% of Michigan's working adults have a postsecondary educational credential by the year 2030.
- **Health, Housing and Safety:** This committee examined strategies to ensure that state government is effectively deploying strategies to ensure that the basic needs of low-income Michiganders are met.

For the 2022 report, the work groups also included a limited number of subject experts from outside of state government. The result is a set of 29 recommendations designed to help lift Michiganders out of poverty with the ancillary and critically important goal of improving their health outcomes. The recommendations are organized around the WHO's recognized social determinants of health.

While most of the 2022 recommendations are being introduced for the first time, we have included five recommendations that were first introduced in the PTF's 2021 report that we continue to support. They are noted. The report also includes a section that features 14 recommendations from the 2021 report that have either been adopted or have momentum for adoption. Among them is our recommendation to boost the state's earned income tax credit match, a proposal that could lift at least 22,000 Michiganders out of poverty.







02.

## 2022 Recommendations



## Income and Social Protection

Perhaps more than any social determinant of health, income is linked with health. Raj Chetty's landmark [2016 study](#) in the Journal of the American Medical Association found that the gap in life expectancy between the richest 1% of Americans and poorest 1% of Americans was nearly 15 years. Low-income Americans often find themselves forced to make short-term choices that have long-term health effects, such as forgoing medicine to pay for shelter or buying cheap, less nutritious food to stretch their meal budget.

As evidenced when child poverty dropped 30% with the introduction of the 2020 child tax credit early in the COVID-19 crisis, the strategic deployment of governmental support can have a significant impact on the health and wealth of low-income families. The following recommendations are designed to strengthen Michigan's social safety net and boost the short-term income and long-term wealth of struggling Michiganders.

### **01. Increase investments in a universal benefit application so Michigan residents can apply for resources in one place.**

People living in poverty have limited resources but immediate and diverse needs. From the perspective of Michigan residents, a comprehensive intake system for critical support programs across different agencies can address those diverse needs. For example, if a parent in Michigan finds themselves unemployed through no fault of their own, they can apply for unemployment insurance benefits through the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity's (LEO) Unemployment Insurance Agency (UIA).

If that same parent also needs help affording food because they lost their job, they can apply for the Food Assistance Program administered by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS). And if that parent wanted help covering some heating expenses, they could apply for the Home Heating Credit by contacting the Michigan Department of Treasury. An integrated and comprehensive system could make it easier for our neighbors in need to access resources, while saving residents time and money navigating the complex bureaucracy of multiple government agencies just to get help affording basic needs.

Michigan is one of a few states that already has in place an integrated application for numerous assistance programs via MI Bridges. Using MI Bridges, residents can apply for programs to assist with health care coverage; secure affordable food and basic needs; obtain food and education support to women, infants and children; receive help with child care costs; and get assistance for crisis needs. MI Bridges is also integrated with numerous resources outside of MDHHS. In total, Michigan residents can access more than 30,000 state and local services across the state via MI Bridges.

As such, Michigan should continue in the direction of an integrated application for programs to improve the ease of navigating government for help.

## 02. Provide an option for parents to deposit their child support payments into the Children's Savings Accounts (CSA) program:

For some families, parents who owe back child support payments would rather deposit their financial support into a savings account for their child. If the receiving parent agrees, this can mean a better chance for long-term support for children. The program could be used as an incentive for paying child support if the state matches the payments or forgives past child support debt owed to the state in exchange for deposits. A [2020 Sociology Mind study](#) showed that parents who hold CSAs for their children are more likely to report that their children have excellent or very good health than those who do not have a CSA.

## 03. Review Michigan's restrictions on programs and services for qualified immigrants:

Immigrants add immensely to Michigan's economy, cultural landscape and quality of life. However, nearly 15% of foreign-born Michiganders experience poverty, compared with 13% of U.S.-born Michiganders. Still, federal and state laws and regulations could lock them out of access to needed benefits. Housing and food insecurity and other threats to their health and welfare are all barriers to gaining self-sufficiency. States have wide latitude to mitigate barriers to benefit access. There is growing recognition of the connection between health outcomes and preservation of the social safety net.

The PTF urges MDHHS officials to review state policies that limit qualified immigrants' access to benefits to broaden eligibility or develop alternative options for programs defined by federal regulations.



**Nearly 15% of foreign-born Michiganders experience poverty, compared with 13% of U.S.-born Michiganders.**



## Education

Education is a critical social determinant of health for many reasons. Ample research demonstrates that college degree holders earn more than non-degree holders. Income is one of the primary social determinants of health. A [2021 blog from the Tulane School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine](#) argues that education also arms people with the ability to synthesize complex health information and make sound decisions about the veracity of information about health from sources such as social media.

Highly educated workers are also more likely to avoid jobs that risk their health and safety. The following recommendations are designed to boost educational outcomes.

### **04. Provide funding to Promise Zones to support the continued implementation of Early Literacy Support Network Hubs:**

According to a [2020 literature review](#) published by the U.S. Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, limited literacy proficiency can adversely affect one's health. Challenges include following medication instructions and communicating with health care providers. Research has shown that chronic conditions like diabetes and cancer are positively correlated with limited literacy skills.

The PTF urges policymakers to provide funding to Promise Zones to support the continued implementation of Early Literacy Support Network Hubs. Early Literacy Support Network Hubs offer an important platform to improve dual-generation and early literacy proficiency rates, which will improve employability and economic security of ALICE families. Dual-generation literacy programs are especially important for families for whom English is a second language.

### **05. Provide additional public school transportation funds for underserved districts, including districts with high counts of students experiencing homelessness and in foster care:**

Districts would have access to funding to boost student transportation options through a state incentive fund.

### **06. Increase and diversify funding to the Great Start Collaboratives and Parent Coalitions:**

With an additional \$9.5 million annual investment to the state education budget, Great Start Collaboratives and Parent Coalitions will significantly boost efforts to support families with challenges involving health, education, employment and food/nutrition.



**Ample research demonstrates that college degree holders earn more than non-degree holders. Income is one of the primary social determinants of health.**

## Unemployment and Job Insecurity

A [2020 literature review](#) by the federal Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion found ample research that explains unemployment as a social determinant of health. Because quality health insurance options are often tied to employment, unemployed people are often either underinsured or uninsured. As a result, they will sometimes forgo preventive health services, putting themselves at risk for chronic disease and other serious health challenges. The following recommendations offer strategies to lower Michigan's unemployment rate and boost job security.

### **07. Expand youth employment preparedness and placement with Young Professionals Plus:**

A [2016 Harvard Business Review](#) report found that American unemployed youth between the ages of 15 and 24 have worse physical well-being compared with employed older adults. The study found that 23% of unemployed youth describe their well-being as thriving compared with 31% of employed workers over age 50.

Young Professionals Plus will allow more than 6,750 young people to engage in a meaningful connection to employers and participate in a skill-building work experience. Young Professionals Plus will support activities such as paid work experiences, pre-apprenticeship activities, internships, job shadowing and on-the-job training opportunities for young persons who are below the ALICE threshold. If a young person has not completed their secondary education, reconnection to K-12 or adult education partners will be included as a priority in their service strategy.

If a young person is disabled and in school, then vocational rehabilitation partnering with Michigan Department of Education (MDE) and the Intermediate School Districts (ISDs) will engage students with a disability with an array of pre-employment transition services to prepare them for work or postsecondary training.

We recognize there is a potential that young people may not have adequate or reliable transportation and would like to include a pilot project to provide Mobility-on-Demand for those needing the service. Gov. Whitmer's budget proposal includes \$15 million to provide work experience, career exploration and career preparedness for youth and young adults ages 14-24 who earn or whose families earn an income at or below the ALICE rate.

### **08. Return to Earn:**

The PTF supports the establishment of a Return to Earn initiative. Return to Earn will provide a \$250 incentive for each of the first three months of employment for unemployed workers reentering the workforce in businesses with 100 or fewer employees. The program would have an equity focus, consciously recruiting from underserved communities and encouraging employers to use skill-based hiring to improve and diversify their talent pipelines. The initiative would offer participants wraparound support and career preparedness training.



**09. Establish a highly visible education and awareness effort to boost participation in and access to a formal network of Community-Based Education and Training Information Portals:**

The goal is to create accessible and highly visible spaces located in distressed communities where underserved and underrepresented residents (including the ALICE population) can receive career-focused information, guidance and resources needed to enter and complete education and training programs leading to industry-recognized credentials and career pathways to high-wage, high-skill, in-demand jobs.

The strategy involves leveraging resources and partnerships between the State of Michigan, workforce development system, public education and training institutions with community-based organizations and other stakeholders with history, credibility and trust in the communities.

**10. Create a mobility wallet to boost access to transportation options:**

In 2015, the Detroit Free Press published a story about James Robertson, a 56-year-old Detroit resident who walked 21 miles round trip each day to get to a factory job in the suburbs. Over the years, gaps in the state's public transit systems, coupled with the lack of affordability for car ownership due in part to high car insurance rates in cities like Detroit, have often made access to the transportation low-income Michiganders need to get to work elusive. Strategies to address auto insurance affordability, create public-private transportation programs and better align regional transportation systems are welcome developments on the public transit front.

But PTF believes the need for innovative strategies that leverage technology to boost transportation options for low-income Michiganders continues to be a top priority. A mobility wallet refers to an electronic or card-based payment solution that can be used for public and/or private transportation services, helping facilitate easier, more seamless multimodal transportation by providing residents with access to rides, passes, optimized fares and/or credits. To date, mobility wallet pilot programs have been proposed and/or implemented in cities across the United States, including Los Angeles (CA), Portland (OR), Boise (ID), Pittsburgh (PA) and Oakland (CA).

The State of Michigan is exploring a mobility wallet pilot program by launching the Michigan Mobility Wallet Challenge, a collaborative effort including the Office of Future Mobility and Electrification (OFME), Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), LEO and the PTF. MDOT will distribute a portion of the \$5 million Service Initiative Fund to fund multiple innovative pilot mobility wallet initiatives that can be used for all transit services in Michigan.

The goal of this will be to simplify the transit payment process by allowing riders to load funds and/or connect bank accounts to a single platform and create a streamlined mechanism to offer income-based fares, increasing access to public transit systems in Michigan.

## Food Insecurity

Good nutrition is foundational to the preservation of health. The paucity of nutritious food options in some Michigan communities has been well documented and has emerged as a leading social determinant of health. According to the final report of the Michigan Food Security Council, Michigan ranks above the 75th percentile nationally for annual statewide health care costs associated with food insecurity, or \$1.8 billion per year. Efforts to boost access to high-quality food should be a priority for Michigan. The following recommendations will reduce food insecurity in Michigan.

### **11. Develop a comprehensive plan to address postsecondary student hunger:**

Food insecurity is a chronic problem for college students. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, many students lost access to food because classes were held online. A recent survey found that more than half of college students sometimes used off-campus food banks, and more than one-third said hunger had impacted their ability to study at some point. One-third of college students knew someone who had dropped out due to difficulty affording food.

However, assistance is available and recent actions by the Whitmer administration have broadened eligibility to food assistance for college students. In March 2021, Michigan leveraged a federal exception to temporarily expand food access to college students. In the year prior, MDHHS worked with LEO to permanently expand eligibility to many college students enrolled in career and technical education programs.

Michigan should build on these achievements and connect additional college students to help with affording food. Collaboration between Michigan's departments overseeing food assistance (MDHHS), financial aid (Treasury) and workforce services (LEO) alongside the state's postsecondary institutions could push the needle on college food insecurity.

Funding could be provided to these departments to do the following:

- Collaborate with college students to identify specific barriers to affording food and how Michigan can improve services.
- Provide staff support for maintaining communication and using data to conduct outreach to postsecondary institutions and their students about resources available to combat hunger on college campuses.
- Conduct direct outreach to Futures for Frontliners and Reconnect students.
- Include information about Food Assistance Program eligibility and how to apply alongside traditional financial aid information.

### **Expand programs that improve food security for K-12 students:**

More than half (50.5%) of Michigan's public school students meet federal eligibility guidelines to receive free or reduced meals. But many students who are eligible can't access these meals. The Poverty Task Force makes the following recommendations to better serve food-insecure students:





**Under federal rules, students with family income between 130% and 185% of federal poverty level (FPL) are eligible to purchase breakfast and lunch at a reduced price, 30 cents and 40 cents, respectively.**

**Currently, for a family of four in Michigan, this means their income is \$49,025 or below.**

**12. Establish a permanent summer EBT program and expand to the entire state:**

Many K-12 students who are eligible to receive free or reduced meals at school face food insecurity in the summer. Summer EBT programs give these students' families access to an Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card that they can use to purchase food items from stores. PTF recommends that MDHHS create a permanent summer EBT program for students who meet eligibility guidelines throughout the state.

**13. Eliminate reduced-price meal categories for breakfast and lunch:**

Eliminating reduced-price meal categories would reduce a cost barrier to families on the cusp of free lunch and breakfast eligibility. Under federal rules, students with family income between 130% and 185% of federal poverty level (FPL) are eligible to purchase breakfast and lunch at a reduced price, 30 cents and 40 cents, respectively.

Currently, for a family of four in Michigan, this means their income is \$49,025 or below. There are several options that may be considered here: eliminating the reduced-price meal category for breakfast only; eliminating the reduced-price meal category for only lunch; or eliminating the reduced-price meal category for both breakfast and lunch, which would equate to an annual investment to the well-being of our students of between \$518,000 and \$3.5 million depending on the option chosen. (Repeated 2021 recommendation)

**14. Create state incentive for schools that are eligible for Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) to be fully funded to provide free school meals:**

The Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) is a federal reimbursement option for schools participating in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program. Schools or districts that elect to use CEP serve meals to all students at no cost to them. A school, group of schools or district is eligible for CEP if at least 40% of enrolled students participate in certain public benefit programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or are identified as being automatically eligible for free school meals. This percentage – known as the identified student percentage (ISP) – is determined largely through a data-matching process called direct certification, which schools are required to do.

Schools can operate under CEP for four years before redetermining their eligibility. Many schools with lower ISPs that qualify may choose not to opt into CEP due to fear of the financial unknown. The Michigan incentive would ensure all schools that are eligible to participate in the Community Eligibility Provision option would be able to participate with minimal risk of needing general fund money to cover costs. This proposal would allow schools with identified student percentage (ISP) of 40% to 62.5% to cover the difference in cost between the federal CEP reimbursement rate and the 100% free meal federal reimbursement, and eliminating total cost for parents would equate to an annual investment to the well-being of our students of roughly \$44 million.

**15. Implement breakfast after the bell in higher-needs school buildings:**

The PTF urges policymakers to require breakfast-after-the-bell implementation for all school buildings with 60% or more free- and reduced-price-eligible students. Challenges such as unreliable transportation and stigma often stymie efforts to get children who are eligible for free breakfast at school access to the meal before the bell rings and school day begins.

Breakfast-after-the-bell programs eliminate these barriers and provide students with a healthy breakfast to start their day. Eating breakfast and the increased nourishment early in the day has been proved to be associated with decreased chronic absenteeism and greater focus for academic performance. Several states have implemented breakfast-after-the-bell programs. (Repeated 2021 Recommendation)

**16. Remove state requirement that at least 20% of a school's students are eligible for free- or reduced-priced meals for the school to be able to serve breakfast:**

If this proposal is adopted, every student will have access to breakfast at school regardless of their free/reduced-price meal percentage. Implementation of this proposal will expand access to more low-income children having a nourishing meal at the start of the day that will likely improve attendance and academic outcomes. (Repeated 2021 Recommendation)





*"The social determinants of food insecurity have the greatest impact on the nature, scope and causes of food insecurity. **There is an interconnectedness between poverty, health and food insecurity.***

*These social determinants include racial and ethnic inequality; health, age and disability status; and poverty, income and unemployment status.*

*There is often a perpetual cycle of income restriction, food insecurity and adverse health outcomes, which is incredibly difficult to break independently and highlights the necessity of federal, state and charitable food assistance programs. **The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated these challenges for those disparately vulnerable to food insecurity.***

**— Michigan Food Security Council  
Report, Feb. 7, 2022**

**17. Elimination of Household Information Reports (HIRs) by school districts participating in Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) as a means of determining student poverty for education funding and accountability and replacement with a more equitable indicator for use in education funding:**

Revise education funding formulas and Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) accountability plans so that student-level and district-level poverty are determined using direct certification data, census data and/or other means-tested datasets in CEP districts. The current methods used to identify economically disadvantaged students in CEP schools and districts negate a key benefit of CEP, namely the administrative relief for school nutrition departments from having to process individual forms collected from families, and the need to identify funding to cover these administrative costs since HIRs cannot be processed using federal school meal funding.

Eliminating HIRs also improves data quality by eliminating a data source that is both self-reported and difficult to collect because HIRs are not tied to the receipt of free school meals. Lastly, the current practice of collecting HIRs undermines the Food Security Council's goal of expanding CEP in Michigan school districts.

## **Housing, Basic Amenities and the Environment**

Housing is a social determinant of health that has been widely examined by researchers. There are many ways that homelessness or low-quality housing contribute to poor health outcomes. A [2018 Health Affairs literature review](#) outlines four housing categories that affect health outcomes:

- People who experience chronic homelessness also experience higher rates of mortality and rely on expensive emergency room visits for their sporadic health care treatment, adding to hospitals' uncompensated care burden. Research shows that people for whom housing instability means falling behind on rent or frequent moves have worse health outcomes than people who have housing stability.
- Housing conditions can also affect health outcomes. Environmental factors such as exposure to extreme heat or cold, the presence of lead in pipes or paint and pest infestations can lead to conditions such as hypothermia, brain damage and asthma.
- The lack of housing affordability is also a major threat to health because when people spend too much of their income on housing, they sometimes forgo important health supports such as nutritious food, medication or health treatments.
- The built environment of neighborhoods also affects health outcomes. Neighborhoods that lack safe exercise options, access to quality food options and safe routes for kids to take when they walk to schools often have poor health outcomes.



The following recommendations are designed to provide more and better housing options and neighborhood amenities for low-income Michiganders.

**18. Create Statewide Rental Housing Partnership Trust [SRHPT]:**

A SRHPT can be used to create, oversee and implement programming such as a Landlord Risk Mitigation Fund (LRMF). An LRMF provides a mechanism to reimburse landlords who have taken on perceived “risky” tenants, such as returning citizens. A trust could be set up as a pilot, though success in other states may provide adequate evidence of efficacy. Similar programs have been established in Ohio and Minnesota for less than a million dollars.

**19. Incorporate the Home Heating Credit application into the MI Bridges process:**

According to a 2006 report in the journal of the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#), children in families participating in the federally funded Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) – which provides financial assistance for home heating, medically necessary home cooling and emergencies due to weather-related fuel shortages – were at a healthier weight and at less nutritional risk, compared with their nonparticipant peers. Home Heating Credit (HHC) is Michigan’s primary heating assistance program and is funded by the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program.

HHC offers preventative benefits to low-income households needing assistance with their home heating costs. The program is administered by the Michigan Department of Treasury, which determines eligibility and issues the benefit.

A household can apply for the HHC using the Home Heating Credit Claim form (MI-1040CR-7). The form can be submitted with state of Michigan taxes or applied for separately using only the MI-1040CR-7 form. Eligibility is based on income, number of exemptions and household heating costs. In FY 2020, \$60 million was allocated from LIHEAP to the HHC with 254,654 households receiving credits. Inclusion of the HHC application into the MI Bridges application process would help boost awareness of and participation in this vital program.



## 20. Establish a Rental Registry to track lead abatement efforts in rental dwellings:

There are few social determinants of health that have a more deleterious effect on humans than exposure to lead. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), exposure to lead is a serious threat to a child's health. Potential adverse effects include damage to the brain and nervous system, slowed growth and development, learning and behavior problems and hearing and speech problems. As we learned from the Flint water crisis, lead pipes are a source of lead exposure.



Federal infrastructure dollars will be spent in coming years to mediate this threat. However, peeling lead-based paint in homes that were built before lead-based paint was banned in the United States in 1978 could be a source of childhood lead exposure. These homes are more likely to be occupied by low-income Michiganders. According to the CDC, Black Americans are also disproportionately affected by lead exposure.

Proposals to implement a statewide rental certification registry, which would establish uniform statewide standards for lead in rental properties built before 1978 and would incentivize investment in lead remediation by landlord, have stalled. This fall, Michigan House Democrats introduced a package of bills on lead prevention, including HB 5419 sponsored by Rep. Stephanie A. Young, a bill to require lead paint inspections to be completed on the sale of any home that was built before 1978. This bill needs legislative action.

In FY 20, the governor's executive budget recommendation and final budget included a lead poisoning prevention fund to give landlords access to capital to make home improvements and reduce lead poisoning. The PTF encourages state leaders to boost investment in lead remediation efforts for rental properties.



## 21. Eviction diversion programming:

Governmental eviction diversion programs grew exponentially because of the COVID-19 crisis. As of February 2022, 160,000 Michiganders have avoided eviction with help from the state's COVID-19 Emergency Rental Assistance (CERA) program. The PTF recommends the development of a task force of stakeholders charged with developing an action plan (current needs and upstream causes); gathering information regarding existing programs in the state; and researching/collecting data on best practices nationally.

## 22. Expand housing assistance to foster youth:

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Foster Youth to Independence vouchers offer eligible youth between the ages of 18 and 24 who have transitioned from foster care to independence an opportunity to have a portion of their rent covered for a period of 36 months. The program relies on local Michigan Department of Health and Human Services child welfare offices to establish agreements with interested local housing authorities. PTF urges MDHHS child welfare officials to build partnerships with local housing authorities to provide this valuable service for foster youth who have aged out of foster care.

## 23. Alternative eligibility for foreign-born and nonresident Michigan homebuyers and/or renters:

Strategies to position the state as a welcoming place for foreign-born individuals and families have increasing importance. Foreign-born Michiganders are more likely to be poor than their U.S.-born peers. Approximately 15% of foreign-born Michiganders are at or below federal poverty guidelines, compared with about 13% of U.S.-born Michiganders.

Programs that have helped low-income Michiganders secure housing could prevent newly arriving individuals from experiencing homelessness, but under current state regulations, they are not eligible for programs such as down-payment assistance and rental assistance. The PTF urges state officials to revisit eligibility requirements for programs that help Michiganders purchase or rent homes to include foreign-born and nonresident homebuyers or renters.



## Early Childhood Development

A 2011 issue brief by the [Robert Wood Johnson Foundation](#) outlined the evidence that social disadvantages experienced in childhood can limit children's opportunities for health throughout life. However, the brief argued that high-quality early childhood programs can lead to better health outcomes both in childhood and later life. The following recommendations are designed to help get Michigan toddlers off to a strong start in educational achievement and health.

### 24. Support the implementation and development of a Rural Child Care Initiative in Michigan:

In 2021, the American Institutes for Research conducted eight focus groups in four rural communities in Michigan. Among the findings:

- There are not enough early childhood education spots available for the demand that exists. Waitlists are so long that by the time a spot opens, families often find that their child is too old to use it.
- Rural child care options that do exist are often too far away. Lack of access to reliable transportation is often a barrier for rural parents who seek child care.
- Parents who work nontraditional hours are often locked out of child care options.

The PTF supports the creation of a state Rural Child Care Initiative that would be charged with accelerating the startup and expansion of licensed child care businesses in areas with more than three children under age 5 for every licensed child care slot.

### 25. Develop a universal home visitation program for all newborn children in the first month of life:

The Public Health Nursing academic journal published a [2016 literature review](#) that concluded that...

*"Community and home visitation interventions by nurses can provide an effective means for mitigating social determinants of health by empowering people at risk for health disparities to avoid injury, maintain health, and prevent and manage existing disease."*

The PTF supports a strategy to offer families of newborn children one to three home visits to get parenting support, education and community-based resources, as well as to be connected to any additional needed services from the community. These visits will enable families to mitigate challenges by connecting them to quality educational, environmental and employment supports.





## Social Inclusion and NonDiscrimination

Discrimination is a stressor, causing people from socially disadvantaged communities to experience short- and long-term health challenges. A [2020 Health Affairs report](#) describes the hypervigilance that members of marginalized communities can experience in anticipation of discrimination. This hypervigilance can lead to physiological conditions such as cardiovascular and metabolic health challenges, high blood pressure, sleep disturbances and depression. Intentional social inclusion and efforts to challenge discrimination can diminish the impact of this social determinant of health.

A focus on discrimination should also include efforts to address structural environmental disparities in housing and safety. The following recommendations are explicitly aimed at removing barriers for disadvantaged communities in Michigan.

### 26. Language access plan:

To advance language access in public services across the state, Michigan should develop a language access plan that is overseen by an executive-level office and includes meaningful accountability mechanisms for agencies such as regular compilation of compliance plans, formalized complaint procedures and regular reports to the governor or Legislature on progress made and plans for the future. Gov. Whitmer's 2023 budget proposal includes \$700,000 for the development of a statewide language access plan. The plan will be led by the Office of Global Michigan. The PTF supports the governor's proposed budget allocation for this important priority.

### 27. Strategies to improve water quality and affordability:

While water is a staple of life for all humans, communities of color in Michigan have been disproportionately affected by water quality and affordability issues. For many decades, repairs and upgrades to water infrastructure have been deferred, threatening public health, causing environmental damage and increasing the cost of repairs and upgrades. Through a historic \$500 million investment leveraging existing federal and state resources, the MI Clean Water Plan will provide significant resources to communities to rebuild Michigan's water infrastructure systems. The MI Clean Water Plan invests \$207.1 million in clean drinking water and \$293 million in safe wastewater management projects.



Investment in drinking water quality funding from prior years sets aside **\$207.1 million** to address drinking water needs, including:

**\$102.1 million**

**Lead Service Line Replacement in Disadvantaged Communities Program**

**\$37.5 million**

**Lead and Copper – Drinking Water Asset Management Grants**

**\$35 million**

**Non-Lead Drinking Water Infrastructure Grants**

**\$25 million**

**PFAS and Emerging Contaminants – Contamination and Consolidation Grants**

**\$7.5 million**

**Affordability and Planning Grants**

The PTF believes the state's water quality plan offers a historic opportunity to address water infrastructure challenges and water affordability in disadvantaged communities and train workers in those communities for water infrastructure jobs. An example of the potential of this approach is Eastside Community Network's "Rain Ready Homes" program in flood plains on Detroit's lower east side.

The program trains local contractors to equip homes with anti-flood protections in the wake of increased frequency of extreme rain events and to protect home health with backflow preventer valves and green infrastructure. This approach seeks to address two social determinants of health by including residents and businesses in the green economy and addressing home environmental concerns.



## Access to Affordable Health Services of Decent Quality

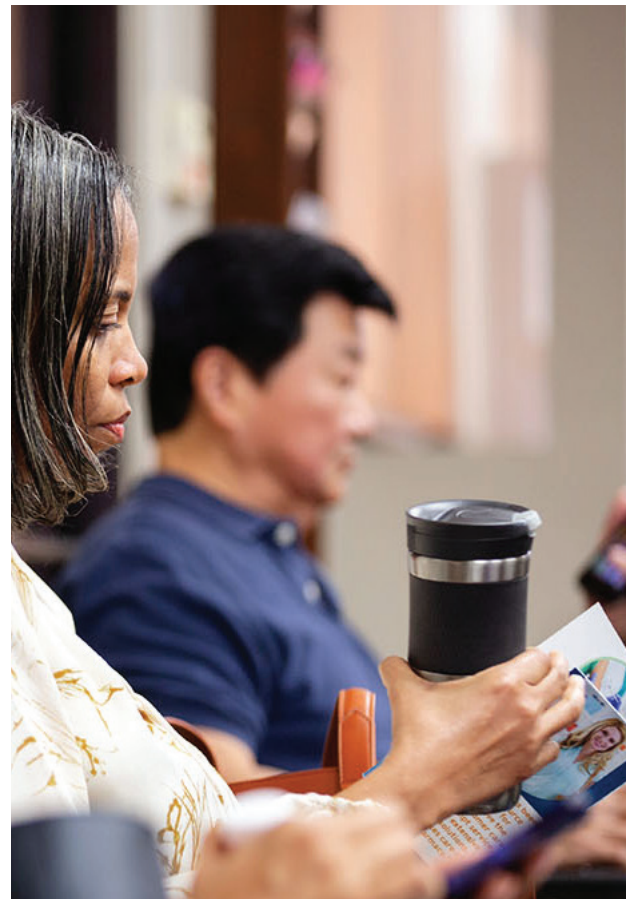
In some ways, Michigan is a model for health care access. According to a [2020 analysis by Bridge magazine](#), the state's health care access standing greatly benefits from union households, which typically have good health care benefits. Union benefits and the state's extension of Medicaid to 600,000 Michiganders through the Affordable Care Act are among the factors that have helped land Michigan in the top 10 states for access to health insurance, the number of primary care physicians and immunization rates among adolescents.

However, access to quality health care options still eludes many low-income Michiganders. Areas of the state with high concentrations of poverty in both urban and rural settings often have too few health care providers. Furthermore, Michigan's investments in public health have dropped 16%, adjusted for inflation, since 2003. The following recommendations are designed to boost health care access for low-income Michiganders.

### 28. Extending health care coverage to children of qualified immigrants:

The 1996 federal welfare reform law established a five-year waiting period that prevents lawfully present, otherwise eligible immigrants from accessing some public programs, like Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), until they have lived in the country for five years. However, since 2009, states have had the option to waive this waiting period for lawfully residing children (up to 21 years old) and/or pregnant people and would receive substantial federal matching funds to do so.

This administrative policy change would impact lawful permanent residents ("green card" holders), nonimmigrants and those with Temporary Protected Status, for example. Michigan is one of only 16 states that has not waived the waiting period. Nearly half of Michigan's immigrant parents with children ages 0-4 (48%) or 5-10 (42%) are low income. Extending public health care options to the children of immigrants will drastically improve health outcomes in immigrant communities.



**Michigan's investments in public health have dropped 16%, adjusted for inflation, since 2003.**

## 29. Diverting people with behavioral health needs away from the justice system:

According to data from the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), nearly half of people who are jailed in America have been diagnosed with a mental illness. A 2018 study by BJS shows that 26% of people in local jails and 14% of prisoners in state and federal prisons have serious mental illnesses. For the general public, seriously mentally ill people represent 5% of the population.

The criminalization of mental illness is an especially daunting problem for people of color, who are more likely to be arrested and incarcerated and less likely to receive mental health treatment before and during their incarceration. The PTF fully supports policies that would give people with behavioral health issues access to needed treatment instead of incarceration.

This includes legislative reforms to promote the use of mental health alternatives (in progress), improved training (in progress) and legislative and administrative prioritization of funding to support increased mental health/crisis stabilization/training in the community. Other stakeholders (law enforcement, Michigan Commission on Law Enforcement Standards, courts and MDOC) must adopt internal policies that support diversion, have a clear understanding of available resources and actively engage in diversion programming and training. (2021 Recommendation)



**A 2018 study by BJS shows that 26% of people in local jails and 14% of prisoners in state and federal prisons have serious mental illnesses.**





03.

## Celebrating Progress

## 2021 PTF Policy Recommendations Update

The PTF first introduced the following policy recommendations in its first report, which was issued in February 2021. These recommendations have either been adopted or have gained momentum.



### 01. Expansion of the state's Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) match:

PTF's 2021 report urged state policymakers to boost the state's match of the federal Earned Income Tax Credit from the current 6% match to at least a 20% match. EITC is a proven anti-poverty strategy, giving struggling families a much-needed infusion of cash. EITC's many benefits for low-income families include positive health outcomes for both parents and children and higher test scores and increased high school completion and college attendance rates for children.

Additionally, a larger state EITC could be a significant employment incentive, since only working Michiganders are eligible to receive the credit. This benefit cannot be overstated at a time when worker shortages have stymied Michigan businesses.

Stakeholders representing a wide array of constituencies have voiced their support for an increased EITC, including the Small Business Association of Michigan, the Detroit Regional Chamber, the Michigan Manufacturers Association, the Michigan League for Public Policy, Michigan Future Inc., Michigan Association of United Ways and the Michigan Catholic Conference.

Happily, significant progress has been made in the effort to boost the state's EITC match. In her FY 2023 budget proposal, Gov. Whitmer expressed support for a 20% EITC state match. Bipartisan legislation has been introduced in the state Legislature. The PTF remains convinced that a substantial boost to the state's EITC is a winning anti-poverty strategy that will also help the state's businesses attract employees at a critical time.





*"The pandemic made clear that low-wage workers live paycheck to paycheck not because they are irresponsibly buying 'unnecessary' luxuries, but because they are in low-wage jobs that leave them struggling to pay for the necessities.*

*The reality is that most of those struggling economically, in good times and bad, are hardworking Michiganders who get up every day and work hard to earn a living.*

***Expanding Michigan's Earned Income Tax Credit** is the best way for the state to support the too-many hardworking Michiganders who are struggling economically."*

**— Lou Glazer, president,  
Michigan Future Inc.**

## 02. Invest in the Michigan Housing and Community Development Fund:

The Michigan Housing and Community Development Fund is an affordable housing program to increase the supply of affordable housing for extremely and very low-income households, including homeless families and individuals and persons with special needs. In its 2021 report, the PTF urged policymakers to find a consistent funding source for the program and to invest at least \$10 million annually in it.

Last July, Gov. Whitmer proposed that the state invest \$100 million in the fund using federal American Rescue Plan dollars. It is estimated that the proposal would help 6,000 Michiganders secure housing, produce 2,000 rental housing units and leverage \$380 million in private funding, while creating 1,600 good-paying jobs. The PTF urges the state Legislature to use ARPA funds to invest \$100 million into the Michigan Housing and Community Development Fund.

## 03. Increase eligibility for child care services:

The Child Development and Care (CDC) program is Michigan's implementation of the federal Child and Development Care Block Grant. The CDC helps families afford child care. Families can qualify for support if they meet eligibility guidelines, including needing child care for an approved activity such as employment or education programs. In its 2021 report, the PTF recommended that Michigan's income eligibility threshold for the program be boosted from 130% of the federal poverty line to 180% to 250% of the federal poverty line. In the 2022 state education budget, income eligibility for child care services was increased to 185% FPL until 2023.

This increase benefits ALICE families in several ways, including reducing their out-of-pocket costs for child care, freeing money for other necessities. Additional child care support also makes it easier for ALICE families to access the labor force, increasing their earning potential. Finally, it helps families afford higher-quality care, which can provide long-term benefits to children, including potentially increasing their earning potential in the long run.



**In the 2022 state education budget, income eligibility for child care services was increased to 185% FPL until 2023.**



#### **04. In-depth study of the effectiveness of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) distribution:**

As of 2017, only 19% of available TANF dollars were used for basic assistance, child care and resources to help low-income Michiganders connect to and retain jobs. This compares with a national average of 52% of TANF dollars being used for core purposes by state governments. Instead, much of Michigan's TANF block grant is allocated to pay for foster care services and for other priorities such as funding merit-based college scholarships for students of any economic status who earn high scores on standardized tests.

To better understand the effectiveness of the state's TANF distribution as a safety net strategy, the PTF requested state funds to commission an in-depth study from a qualified third-party academic entity in 2021. Funding for the study was approved in the state's FY 2022 budget and the PTF has selected a research partner for the report.

#### **05. Support and incubate Children's Savings Accounts (CSAs):**

CSAs offer an exciting platform to help families build wealth and pay for educational expenses – including extracurricular activities that have been lost to budget cuts in struggling districts. We believe state government can and should have a role in incubating efforts to help low-income families build savings accounts to help their children thrive. In its 2021 report, PTF touted CSAs as a proven strategy to build wealth and foster college-going mindsets in Michigan families.

The FY 2022 budget included a \$1 million appropriation to build a statewide infrastructure for CSAs. Through a competitive process, the Community Economic Development Association of Michigan (CEDAM) was awarded a contract for this project. Additionally, \$1 million was appropriated and awarded to establish two pilot CSA programs: one in a rural community and a second in an urban community.

#### **06. Tri-Share Child Care Pilot:**

Launched in 2021, the Tri-Share Child Care Pilot gives parents the opportunity to share child care costs with their employers and state government, with each entity paying a third of the costs. The \$1 million pilot launched in 2021 with three hubs in West Michigan, The Great lakes Bay region and Northwest Lower Pensiula. Through an added \$2.5 million state investment in the 2022 budget and partnerships with the Kellogg Foundation and Ballmer Foundation, the pilot expanded to 10 sites throughout Michigan in 2022. This approach will help make child care costs more affordable for Michigan families and help employers retain talent.

#### **07. Expand Great Start Readiness Program:**

The Great Start Readiness Program (GRSP) is an early education program that has proven benefits for 4-year-old children that include narrowed achievement gaps between low- and high-income students, improved literacy performance by third grade and improved high school graduation rates. In its 2021 report, the PTF recommended expanding access to and eligibility with State School Aid funding for GSRP.

In June 2021, Gov. Whitmer announced a bipartisan funding plan that leverages \$255 million in federal dollars and \$150 million in state dollars to expand access to the program to every eligible 4-year-old in Michigan for the next three years.

#### **08. A coordinated strategy to help communities address the digital divide:**

In its 2021 report, the PTF recommended expansion of strategies to expand broadband access in Michigan. In June 2021, Gov. Whitmer issued Executive Directive 2021-02, which established the Michigan High-Speed Internet Office (MIHI) to make high-speed internet more affordable and accessible. Housed in the LEO, the new office is dedicated to coordinating and advancing the state's efforts to ensure that every home and business in Michigan has access to an affordable, reliable high-speed connection that meets their needs and the skills to use it effectively.

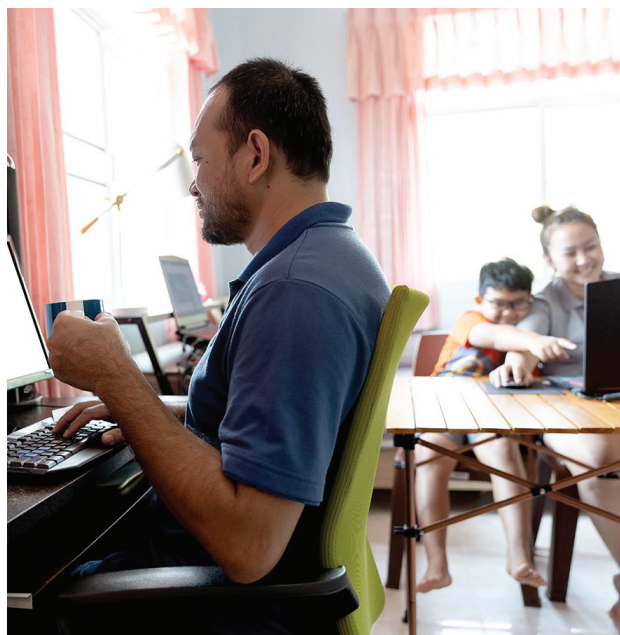
In addition, Michigan's share of the bipartisan federal infrastructure bill will include \$100 million to expand broadband in Michigan. Michigan's 2022 budget tasked the PTF with creating a "coordinated plan to help communities address the digital divide that acts as a barrier for families in accessing available economic, educational, health, housing and safety services." The PTF awarded funding to create a playbook for local communities to plan their broadband expansion efforts.

#### **09. Expand the availability of school meals:**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture provided waivers for the National Child Nutrition Programs that allowed parents and guardians to pick up meals for students learning at a distance due to COVID. As a result, over 222.7 million meals were provided to children regardless of where they were learning – in school, at home or in a hybrid setting. These waivers will continue through the 2021-22 school year, allowing parents and schools the flexibility to continue addressing the pandemic.

#### **10. Establish community land trusts:**

The community land trust shared equity model increases homeownership opportunities for lower-income households by removing the cost of land from home sales and subsidizing the sale cost down to just 75% of the appraised value of the land and improvements. Pilot programs have been launched in Grand Rapids as well as Benzie and Leelanau counties.



**11. Eliminate inequitable access to extracurricular school activities:**

Studies show that students in underserved areas who participate in extracurricular activities have improved attendance, academics, health and well-being that in turn increase graduation rates and career readiness. The PTF urges school districts to eliminate inequitable access to extracurricular activities for students identified as eligible for economically disadvantaged (ED) supports by improving “pay to play” policies with additional auto-identification methods through an MDHHS-MDE partnership for eligible ED students to automatically qualify for scholarships without application.

**12. Expand apprenticeship opportunities while incarcerated:**

The PTF is excited to see the expansion of apprenticeship programs that are meant to coordinate efforts to address employment of formerly incarcerated people in high-demand fields, reduce recidivism and increase economic and social independence in individuals and social mobility in families.



The Michigan Department of Corrections (MDOC) currently provides vocational training in more than 12 different trades, ranging from horticulture to commercial driving to welding to tree trimming and computer coding. Some of these programs are already supported by relationships with unions, including the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) and the Michigan Regional Council of Carpenters and Millwrights. MDOC has also explored a formal partnership with the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) for USDOL apprenticeships for some programs, but that project has been stalled by COVID-19.

In October 2021, MDOC and Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA) signed an updated agreement related to the licensure of returning citizens for certain trades. Administrative changes within MDOC, namely establishing a formal agreement with the USDOL for USDOL apprenticeships, will be necessary to expand these apprenticeships. In addition, MDOC can continue to work to attract union support for other programs so participants accumulate hours toward their apprenticeship and training while incarcerated.

Career and Technical Education programs have restarted within the MDOC. New programs have been launched, including the MTU Schoolhouse and WHV Vocational Village. The department will be seeking to further expand one of its existing vocational villages to add additional programs. MDOC and LARA are signing an updated agreement related to the licensure of returning citizens in certain trades. The PTF is currently working with a fellow from the University of Michigan’s Youth Policy Lab who is focusing on policy solutions to ease the transition to work for returning citizens.



### 13. End asset tests for food assistance:

Michigan is one of only 16 states in the country with an asset test to obtain food assistance. While state officials took a step in the right direction by raising the asset test for food assistance from \$5,000 to \$15,000 in 2019, the Poverty Task Force strongly recommends that Michigan not use an asset test for food assistance. Asset tests can discourage low-income families from saving money, which leaves them vulnerable to food insecurity when emergencies arise.

Conversely, if a family has a short-term financial windfall, they can find themselves disqualified from receiving needed food assistance. Since food assistance dollars are provided by the federal government, the state can actually save money by reducing the administrative costs of assessing families' eligibility. In November 2021, State Sen. Jeff Irwin (D-Ann Arbor) introduced SB 725, legislation that would amend the state's Social Welfare Act to end asset tests for SNAP beneficiaries. (Updated 2021 Recommendation)



### 14. Expand Housing Choice Voucher Pilot between Michigan State Housing and Development Authority (MSHDA) and MDOC:

In its last report, the PTF supported the expansion of the Housing Choice Voucher Pilot. The program offers housing vouchers to returning citizens, who can sometimes find it difficult to find a place to live. While MSHDA has increased the available vouchers by 50%, far too many parolees still don't have access to affordable housing options. If adopted, another PTF recommendation, the proposed **Statewide Rental Housing Partnership Trust**, could remove a barrier to the success of this program by offering incentives to make landlords more inclined to rent to returning citizens.

*Terri, a resident of Roscommon County, **says the MSHDA Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCV)** was a tremendous help after her incarceration. The **HCV played a crucial role in securing stable housing**, which helped her regain custody of her 11-year-old daughter. She was eventually able to gain full custody of her daughter, who is proud that she now has her own bedroom. Terri says she committed her crime because she was behind on rent and was desperate to avoid homelessness for her daughter's sake. She is thrilled that **because of the HCV program**, she does not have to worry about being homeless moving forward.*

# A SNAPSHOT OF MICHIGAN POVERTY



**Population: 9,986,857**



**Median Income: \$59,584**

## Percent Below Poverty Level by Educational Attainment (Population 25 years and over)

Less Than High School Graduate: **26.3%**

High School Graduate: **13.8%**

Some College, Associate Degree: **9.5%**

Bachelor's Degree or Higher: **9.5%**

## Percent Below Poverty Level by Sex

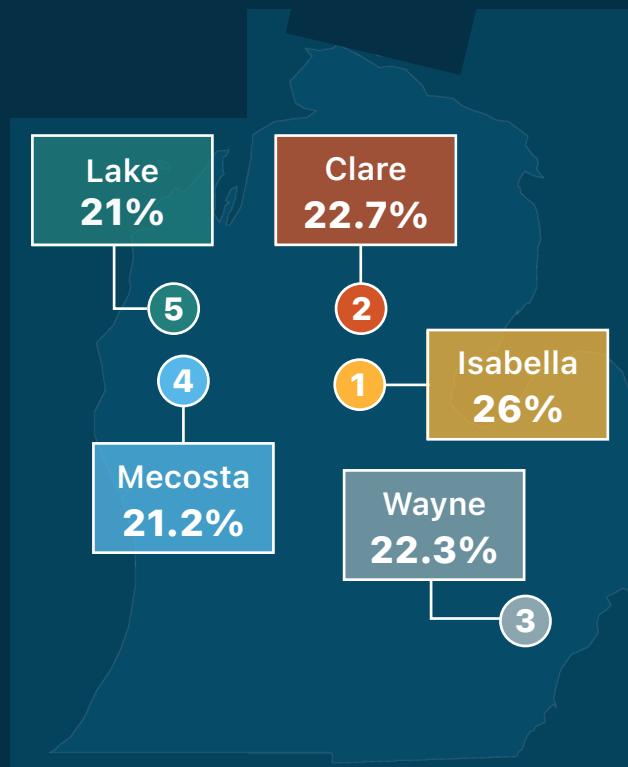


**Male:  
11.9%**



**Female:  
14%**

## Percent Below Poverty Level (Top Five Counties)



Single-Parent Households: **34.2%**

Under 18 Years Below Poverty Level: **17.6%**

Percent Below Poverty Level: **13%**

Homeless by 5th Grade: **7.6%**

ALICE: **25%** | ALICE or Below: **38%**

With Food Stamp/SNAP Benefits: **7.6%**

Life Expectancy: **77.9**



04.

## Michigan Poverty Task Force 2021 Webinars



## 2021 Webinars

**Feb. 22, 2021:** PTF hosted a virtual town hall to introduce the 35 policy recommendations of its 2021 report

**June 16, 2021:** Webinar with Mike Larson, president and CEO of the Michigan Association of United Ways, on the Michigan ALICE report

**July 19, 2021:** Webinar with Luke Forrest, executive director of CEDAM, on Children's Savings Accounts

**Aug. 16, 2021:** Webinar with Peter Ruark, senior policy analyst for the Michigan League for Public Policy, on Michigan's Unemployment Insurance Policies: How Did We Get Here? Where Should We Go?

**Sept. 28, 2022:** Webinar with Susan Corbin, director of the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity (LEO), on the department's recommendations to use American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars to grow Michigan's middle class

**Oct. 27, 2021:** Webinar with Dr. Phillip Knight, chair of the Michigan Food Security Council and executive director of the Food Bank Council of Michigan, on food security in Michigan

**Dec. 14, 2021:** Webinar with Danielle Atkinson, founding director of Mothering Justice, on the organization's "Mama's Agenda"







05.

## Poverty Task Force Members

## Michigan Poverty Task Force Members

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**Paul Ajegba**, Michigan Department of Transportation

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**Liesl Clark**, Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy

**Susan Corbin**, Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity

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**Rachael Eubanks**, Michigan Department of Treasury

**Anita Fox**, Michigan Department of Insurance and Financial Services

**Joe Gasper**, Michigan State Police

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**Elizabeth Hertel**, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services

**John Laliberte**, Michigan Department of Military and Veterans Affairs

**Michelle Lange**, Michigan Department of Technology, Management and Budget

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**Paul Rogers**, Michigan Department of Military and Veterans Affairs

**Lewis Roubal**, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services

**Ray Rustem**, Michigan Department of Natural Resources

**Dan Scripps**, Michigan Public Service Commission

**Kristen Staley**, Michigan Indigent Defense Commission

**Regina Strong**, Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy

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**Lori Yelton**, Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development



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**Donna Givens**, President, Eastside  
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**Lori Johnson**, President, EightCap  
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**The Hon. Brenda Carter**, State  
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**The Hon. Adam Hollier**, State Senator  
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**The Hon. Scott VanSingel**, State  
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MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF  
**LABOR & ECONOMIC  
OPPORTUNITY**