



# MICHIGAN NEEDS A TUNE UP



## THE OWNER'S MANUAL FOR MICHIGAN

The Michigan League for Public Policy has been around almost as long as the automobile itself. And since 1912, Michiganders have always been at the heart of what we do. So, when it came time to put together a plan to improve people's lives through better public policy, we wanted to make sure that Michigan residents were again at the center of it. That's why we've launched **The Owner's Manual for Michigan.**

"People don't think they have a voice, and so they're absent from the political process. We need to empower regular people, so they know they have influence."

- **Gloria, Ypsilanti**

# ABOUT THE OWNER'S MANUAL FOR MICHIGAN



Michigan needs a major tune up. And like the real vehicles we all depend on, it takes a lot of components and tools to make our state go. Without good jobs and training, reliable healthcare, quality education, strong families, and a safe environment, the people in our state can't get ahead.

**That's why we've created a clear and comprehensive plan to help lawmakers on the road ahead — The Owner's Manual for Michigan.**

The Michigan League for Public Policy has talked with hundreds of real Michiganders from all over the state about what they and their communities need to not just survive but to thrive.

**The response was clear: Our current policies are leaving far too many people behind. Now is the time to shift gears.**

"People have played by the rules and through no fault of their own they've lost everything."

**Charlie, Lansing**



## TIME FOR A TUNE-UP



**20%**  
of children under  
age 18 live in pov-  
erty.



**63%**  
of people over the  
age of 25 do not  
have an associate  
degree or higher.



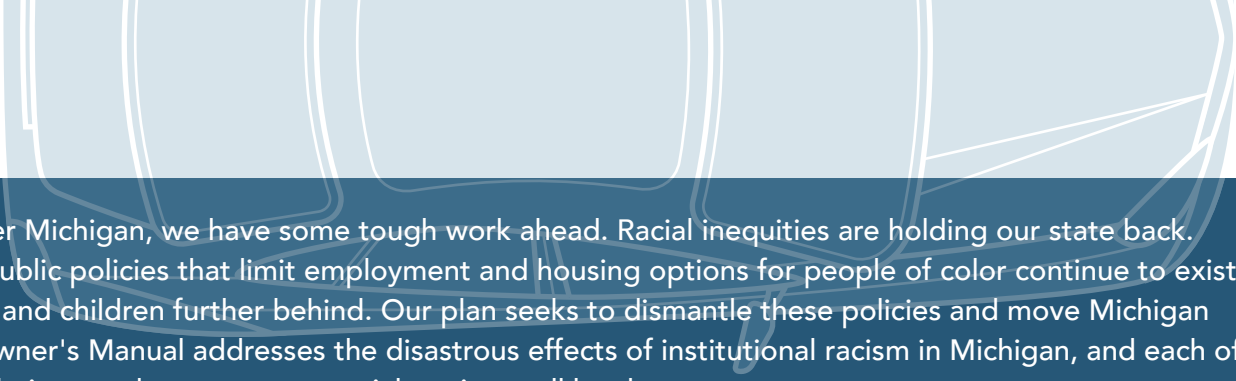
**35%**  
Child care costs  
make up 35% of  
a minimum-wage  
worker's income.



**43%**  
of single-parent  
families live in  
poverty.

"We know people are supposed to be saving their money, but they have to be making enough of a living so they have extra to save. People who are working on minimum wage can't do that."

**Marian, Petoskey**



To make a better Michigan, we have some tough work ahead. Racial inequities are holding our state back. Unacceptable public policies that limit employment and housing options for people of color continue to exist, leaving families and children further behind. Our plan seeks to dismantle these policies and move Michigan forward. The Owner's Manual addresses the disastrous effects of institutional racism in Michigan, and each of our recommendations seeks to promote racial equity at all levels.

You and the nearly 10 million people who call Michigan home are and will always be the real owners of this great state. And it's time that our public policies reflect that. If we're going to fix our state and make sure it's firing on all cylinders for everyone, then residents, advocates and elected officials are going to need to pop the hood, roll up our sleeves and work together to get things running smoothly.

Driven by you and geared toward lawmakers, The Owner's Manual for Michigan will help guide our state in the right direction.

## LET'S DRIVE MICHIGAN FORWARD

The Owner's Manual won't just keep Michigan running. It will help our state shift gears for a smoother and stronger future for all.

**The goals we share are to support:**

### Top-Notch Education

- Jumpstart Early Learning
- Ramp up School Funding
- Develop a Road Map for Early Literacy

### Strong Workers

- Pave the Way for Better Jobs
- Create a Route for Building Skills
- Get Justice-involved Residents Back on the Road

### Healthy Communities

- Curb Public Health Threats
- Drive Healthcare Forward
- Build Bridges for Immigrants
- Give Kids Keys to a Strong Future

### Thriving Families

- Fill up Workers' Pockets
- Move the Needle on Child Care Access
- Open Doors to Safer Homes
- Fuel Families with Healthy Foods

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"We need to do a better job of providing adequate mental health care, not only for adults but for children. I don't want them to grow up like me. I would hate for a child to feel like this every day. I would hate for anyone to feel this way."

**Cheryl, Jackson**

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"Kids can't focus on homework when they're worried about where they're going to get their next meal."

**Chris, Muskegon**

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"We're told we're in a 'thriving economy,' that the stock market is doing great. But very few of us are engaged in the stock market. Interestingly, this economy isn't helping the people who need it most."

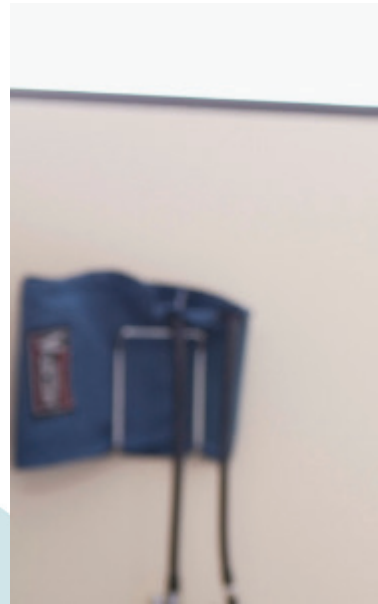
**Richard, Detroit**





# HEALTHY FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

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AND



## **MICHIGAN NEEDS HEALTHY COMMUNITIES TO MOVE FORWARD.**

Without a powerful engine, a car can't go. And without strong, healthy residents, our state will be stalled. That's why the Owner's Manual addresses all aspects of health, from our medical care to the safety of our environment. Here's what our focus groups said they wanted Michigan's policymakers to do to make our communities healthier.



DRIVE

# HEALTHCARE FORWARD

No one should be in a position where they have to consider whether their healthcare is affordable before they seek care."

-A.J., Marquette

## THE ROAD AHEAD

To help residents stay healthy and strong, Michigan must:



Protect Medicaid for children and families, including the Healthy Michigan Plan.



Ensure access to high quality, affordable healthcare.



Create better access to mental health coverage and recruit more practitioners.



## TIME FOR A TUNE-UP

Healthcare is constantly on the minds of Michigan families. We hear all the time from people who are concerned about cost and accessibility. And if there is one silver lining in the attempts by Congress to repeal the Affordable Care Act in 2017, it is that healthcare became a kitchen table issue—something we have seen reflected by activists and by people at the voting booth who are concerned about the state of our current system. Barriers to access and cost concerns plague the system set up to ensure that Michiganders stay healthy, so the state must make improving healthcare a priority.



## ABOUT THE OWNER'S MANUAL FOR MICHIGAN

We all agree Michigan needs a major tune-up. And like the real vehicles we all depend on, it takes a lot of components and tools to make our state go. Without good jobs and training, reliable healthcare, quality education, strong families, and a safe environment, our state can't run properly. That's why we've created a clear and comprehensive plan to help lawmakers on the road ahead—the Owner's Manual for Michigan.

# REPAIRING THE PROBLEM: HOW TO IMPROVE HEALTHCARE



- 1. Promote innovative policies and provide financial support for Medicaid.** Medicaid programs provide coverage to nearly 2.5 million Michiganders, and Michigan continues to be a leader when it comes to providing care through this federal-state partnership program. But new so-called “flexibility” given by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services has resulted in initiatives such as work requirements for the Healthy Michigan Plan that will make it harder for individuals to receive coverage. Michigan must move away from initiatives like this that limit coverage and instead push for policies that further the intention of the Medicaid program: providing coverage to people with low incomes.
- 2. Expand access to affordable, accessible healthcare coverage for all.** While the Affordable Care Act (ACA) has improved options for individuals to access health coverage, concerns about costs and accessibility still remain. Moving forward, Michigan must continue to find avenues to make sure that healthcare coverage is not a roadblock to paying for groceries, going to work or school, or caring for children. Options to improve the system include increased subsidies, prescription drug pricing reform, and protecting some of the most popular reforms in the ACA as a roadmap to the ultimate goal of ensuring affordable, quality healthcare for all.
- 3. Increase accessibility to mental health services.** Michigan’s mental health system is complicated, with a long history of issues with accessibility and funding. There are also deep concerns in Michigan about the lack of individuals who can provide this critical care. That is why it is imperative that we encourage medical professionals to go into this field to ensure that wait times and lack of additional staffing are not barriers to those seeking help. One of the best ways to improve our mental health system is to speak with experts and families about what they see as the most appropriate path, but also to encourage the Legislature to allocate adequate funding, which has been lacking significantly, to make sure that state hospitals can provide coverage and families can access services in their own communities.

## SHARING THE ROAD

**Equity is of utmost importance when it comes to building a better Michigan.** Racial disparities are prevalent in our healthcare system. Despite huge coverage gains through the Affordable Care Act (ACA), people of color are still more likely to be uninsured than their White counterparts. Costs also disproportionately impact people of color along with a number of key health status indicators including obesity, diabetes and asthma. Research has also shown the experience of people of color is different when they enter the doctor’s office—with medical professionals not perceiving pain as intense, not prescribing the best prescription options, or even spending an equal amount of time with the patient.

Based on history, many people of color have an understandable distrust of the healthcare system, which is why a focus on equity in this space is so important. It is imperative that we get a greater understanding of the experiences and reasons for our state’s continued disparities in healthcare. We must also insist that as our state moves forward in achieving goals of expanding access and exploring innovative healthcare that we also ensure equity is included at every step.





# GIVE KIDS THE KEYS TO A STRONG FUTURE

"We need to find ways to empower youth."

-Niral, Muskegon

## THE ROAD AHEAD

To support youth and help them thrive regardless of race, place or family income, Michigan must:



Raise the age of juvenile jurisdiction from 17 to 18.



Address the health needs of young people, including sexual education, safety and mental health.



Provide support for young parents and youth aging out of the foster system.



## TIME FOR A TUNE-UP

Overall, Michigan's youth are increasingly graduating from high school and fewer are becoming parents as teenagers. However, a large number are not prepared for college or career training and access to postsecondary opportunities is more limited. **If our state is to prosper, we must invest in youth.** Michigan youth need to be healthy—both physically and mentally—and prepared to transition into adulthood with support from caring adults and assistance with education, housing and employment. Policymakers must also focus their efforts to support justice-involved youth, those aging out of the foster care system, and young parents.



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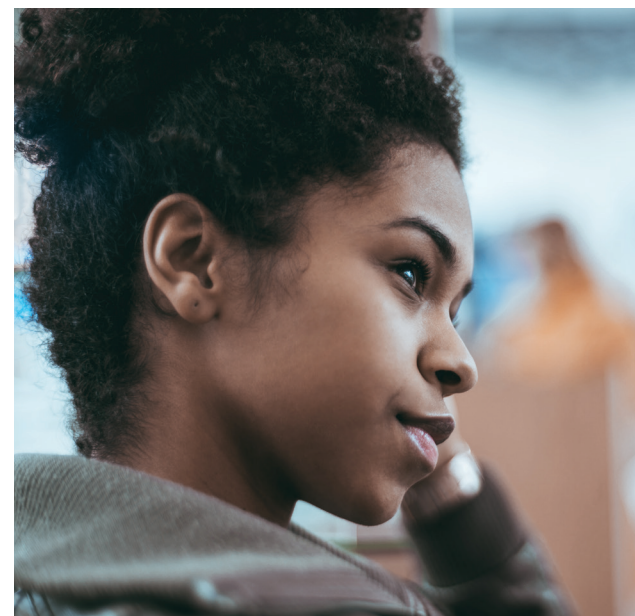
# REPAIRING THE PROBLEM: HOW TO SUPPORT YOUNG PEOPLE IN MICHIGAN



- 1. Raise the age of juvenile jurisdiction.** Michigan remains one of four states to automatically charge 17-year-olds as adults in the criminal justice system regardless of the crime. This prevents justice-involved youth from accessing age-appropriate treatment and services in the juvenile justice system. Instead they are sent into a system—including jail and prison sentences—that was created for adults. Youth prosecuted as adults are more likely to reoffend than their peers in the juvenile justice system. Plus, carrying an adult criminal record acts as a barrier to good jobs, education, housing and more. Raising the age is good for public safety, the economy and for young people.
- 2. Address the health needs of young people.** While teen birth rates are on the decline, U.S. rates are still among the highest of industrialized countries, and Michigan is experiencing a slight rise in teen mothers having additional children before reaching adulthood. Michigan does not mandate that schools provide comprehensive and inclusive sexual education; instead, schools opt-in if they choose to offer it. However, state policy could reverse the process to allow for an opt-out provision. Additionally, with recent trends showing increases in teen deaths, policies need to address both suicide prevention and violence among youth. Expanded access to mental health services should be available to all youths.
- 3. Provide adequate support for young parents and youth aging out of foster care.** Young parents between the ages of 15-24 face a number of barriers as they learn to become parents, yet are still in need of support as they transition into adulthood. Teen parents under 18 encounter unique issues, such as not being old enough to sign a lease to secure housing. Completing school, postsecondary education, and training and finding gainful employment are also difficult. Youth aging out of foster care face similar hurdles in education, housing and employment. They also have a higher likelihood of becoming parents as young adults. Michigan underinvests in support services to help these two groups of young people and should expand funding for programs like the Michigan Adolescent Pregnancy and Parenting Program (MI-APPP) and independent living services.

## SHARING THE ROAD

**Equity is of utmost importance when it comes to building a better Michigan.** Michigan's young people are struggling with a number of challenges. Youth of color, however, experience disparate outcomes, pointing to the need for systemic policy changes to address equity. In the justice and foster care systems, kids of color are overrepresented. Higher rates of teen deaths and teen births exist. To improve outcomes for all youth, policies need to be centered in equity and inclusion. Youth, particularly from marginalized communities, should be heard and included in decision-making. For our state's future workforce, economy and well-being, we must invest in young people to ensure that they are successful adults.





# CURB THREATS TO PUBLIC HEALTH

"We have a real lack of trust with water. There's a lack of trust that government is going to do the right thing about it."

-Patrick, Flint

## THE ROAD AHEAD

To help improve public health, Michigan must:



Keep kids safe from lead exposure.



Investigate child lead poisoning cases



Help local health departments respond to public health threats like PFAS and other environmental dangers.



## TIME FOR A TUNE-UP

State spending on public health has not kept pace with growing health concerns, leaving Michigan ill-prepared to address current threats and future crises. In recent years, Michigan has maintained one of the nation's lowest per-capita spending levels on public health, even though the state ranks poorly with regard to a number of serious but preventable health conditions. Exposure to environmental hazards in our air, water and homes is a factor in Michiganders' poor health, leading to avoidable healthcare costs, premature death, lost opportunity and a lower quality of life for adults and children alike. We must give our local health departments and other entities the resources to prevent toxic exposures and respond effectively.



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# REPAIRING THE PROBLEM:

## HOW TO IMPROVE PUBLIC HEALTH

- 1. Continue to fund the Child Lead Exposure Elimination Commission:** In 2018, the Commission awarded more than \$757,000 in grants to a number of organizations, including local health departments (LHDs), for evidence-based pilot programs to perform universal blood testing and provide vulnerable families with a variety of services. Maintaining the Commission's current funding level in the coming budget year should be a priority in the state budget.

Because childhood is a crucial time for development of the brain and the rest of the body, exposure to toxins like lead is especially harmful during this period. The resulting physical health problems, cognitive impairments and academic challenges can affect children for the rest of their lives. Childhood lead poisoning is linked to an irreversible decline in IQ, a higher frequency of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, increased juvenile crime and a loss in lifetime earnings. Adults suffer from the impact of exposure, too: nationally, lead is linked to more than 400,000 deaths every year.

- 2. Provide funding to help local health departments investigate lead poisoning.** In budget year 2012, funding to states for lead poisoning prevention from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention was cut by more than 90%, forcing many LHDs in Michigan to scale back elevated blood lead (EBL) investigations or discontinue them altogether. When a child has been poisoned by lead, an EBL investigation is crucial to identifying the source and preventing future poisonings in the same home. A dedicated state-level revenue stream for local EBL investigations would create a smoother process and ensure that all children affected by lead receive the attention they deserve no matter where they live.
- 3. Ensure reliable funding for response to PFAS and other harmful substances:** As the state is expected to continue discovering sites contaminated by PFAS and other pollutants are certain to come to light in the future, going forward it is important that this line item continues to be funded on an annual basis through the regular appropriations process. Supplementals may provide guaranteed funding for only a few months at a time, creating planning challenges for LHDs, requiring them to shuffle staff around and potentially creating discontinuity in response to environmental problems. Funding LHD response to these incidents on a yearly basis would improve efficiency and effectiveness in protecting the public.

## SHARING THE ROAD

**Equity is of utmost importance when it comes to building a better Michigan.** Social and environmental factors affecting health, such as exposure to pollutants, vary drastically based on income, zip code, race and ethnicity. As a result, rural and urban residents experience worse health outcomes than their suburban counterparts, and even within the same community disease prevalence, mortality rates and life expectancy can be inconsistent from neighborhood to neighborhood. African Americans, Native Americans and Latinx people suffer from worse health overall than Whites and Asians. Through its impacts on education and employment opportunities, poor health is a key driver of intergenerational poverty and, consequently, avoidable government expenditures on healthcare and other services to meet people's basic needs. A robust public health sector is crucial to protecting all Michiganders from environmental threats to their health and well-being, regardless of race, place or income.



# BUILD BRIDGES FOR IMMIGRANTS

"A lot of immigrants can't get a license. So it either causes trouble on the roads or it means they can't get to work."

-Frank, Detroit

## THE ROAD AHEAD

To protect immigrant families and build a stronger state, Michigan should:



Make sure children who are lawful permanent residents have healthcare coverage under CHIP.



Provide state driver's licenses or identification cards for all residents.



Implement safe zone policies for schools, hospitals, clinics, workplaces and courts.



Ensure full language access at key state agencies for residents with limited English proficiency.



## TIME FOR A TUNE-UP

Michigan has long been home to thousands of immigrants from all over the world. Immigrants in Michigan are students, workers, neighbors and business owners. They enrich our communities and help our state maintain a strong, modern economy. Over the past two years, immigrants have endured anti-immigrant rhetoric at the federal level and harmful policies that have led to painful family separation, loss of vital public services, and mass confusion and fear. Under new leadership, Michigan can be a leader in defending against a dangerous federal agenda by setting policies that protect families and help build a state where all residents can participate fully and thrive.



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# REPAIRING THE PROBLEM: HOW TO PROTECT IMMIGRANTS IN MICHIGAN

- 1. Ensure long-term health and well-being for Michigan's children by providing coverage sooner to more children eligible for MICHild and Medicaid under CHIPRA.** CHIPRA (the federal Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act) creates an opportunity to provide children who are lawful permanent residents (or green card holders) and pregnant women with Medicaid access to healthcare without the typical five-year wait time. State leaders could choose to exercise this option by amending the state Medicaid plan and also exploring legislation to cover all children regardless of immigration status.
- 2. Provide access to driver's licenses or state identification cards for all residents.** Lack of driver's licenses means that many immigrants and residents who cannot prove citizenship are unable to obtain insurance or properly register their vehicles. Being able to drive is essential for getting to work, buying groceries and dropping kids off at school, for example. The Michigan Legislature must adopt a plan to get identification cards into the hands of all residents regardless of status.
- 3. Make communities safer by implementing safe zone policies.** Safe zone policies are grounded in the mission and legal obligations of schools, clinics, and other entities to protect the rights of students, patients and consumers. Creating safe zones could be accomplished through an executive order from the governor or guidance from the attorney General. It is also key that the state publish companion community education materials regarding the rights of immigrants to be safe and secure in these locations.
- 4. Ensure full language access at key state agencies for residents with limited English proficiency.** Language justice is key to building an inclusive Michigan. Many state agencies lack bilingual staff, interpretation resources, or appropriate language access plans and protocols to provide equal services to state residents with limited English proficiency. A comprehensive and fully-funded state language access policy is needed.

## SHARING THE ROAD

**Equity is of utmost importance when it comes to building a better Michigan.** Immigrants who come from the same world region can have vastly different experiences in the United States due to race, socioeconomic status and level of English language proficiency. Immigrants of color, in particular, are more likely to experience discrimination and barriers to opportunity than their White counterparts. These barriers often take the form of residential segregation, limited access to well-paying, quality jobs, and poorly funded schools in their communities, among others. Public policies that address racial inequalities in health and economic well-being are needed to ensure that more families of color, both immigrant and U.S.-born, can thrive.







# THRIVING FAMILIES

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## **FAMILIES THRIVE WHEN THEY HAVE THE FUEL THEY NEED.**

It's hard for families to get ahead when they can't meet their basic needs. For policies to make a difference for families, they need to address more than one generation—and more than one kind of family. Here's what our focus groups said they wanted Michigan's policy-makers to do to help our families thrive.



# OPEN DOORS TO SAFER HOMES

"Everything starts at home, and housing units aren't always safe. Families need plumbing, electricity, cleanliness."

-Mike, Detroit

## THE ROAD AHEAD

To make sure residents and their families have safe places to live, Michigan must:



Prohibit landlords from unfairly rejecting prospective tenants.



Identify a permanent revenue source for Michigan's housing trust fund.



Develop a statewide housing plan to maximize existing funds for home repairs and other housing needs.



## TIME FOR A TUNE-UP

Michigan families, especially those with the lowest incomes, are experiencing a crisis-level shortage of affordable housing. Over the last several decades, incomes for the majority of the state's households have not kept pace with rising home prices, and today some employers are struggling to fill positions because prospective workers can't afford to live nearby. Forced to make difficult choices between shelter and other basic needs, families experience poor health, homelessness and other critical life disruptions that limit academic achievement, employment opportunity, and earning potential. An adequate supply of high-quality, affordable housing is essential for Michigan's families, communities and workforce to thrive.



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# REPAIRING THE PROBLEM: HOW TO MAKE SURE HOMES ARE AFFORDABLE AND SAFE



- 1. Prohibit landlords from refusing prospective tenants based on their source of income (SOI).** Housing vouchers are designed to diffuse concentrated poverty and desegregate neighborhoods by giving families with low incomes the option to move to neighborhoods with better opportunities for health, education and employment. Some landlords, however, are unwilling to rent to voucher holders. In some cases, SOI discrimination may provide cover for landlords to violate fair housing laws. Local anti-SOI discrimination ordinances (which already exist in several Michigan communities) are linked to an increase in the voucher use rate and neighborhood racial integration. A state-level ban on SOI discrimination backed by strong enforcement measures should be enacted to protect all Michigan families with non-wage income no matter where they live.
- 2. Fund Michigan's housing trust fund (HTF).** State HTFs can supplement federal housing programs, fund projects and services prevented by federal rules, and support local governments and organizations in implementing affordable solutions for a market that's often underserved by for-profit developers. On average, every dollar a state HTF invests in the creation, rehabilitation and preservation of affordable housing generates \$7 in further public and private investment. Since its creation, the Michigan Housing and Community Development Fund (MHCDF) has received only two rounds of one-time, limited funding—in 2008 and 2012. Funded projects attracted as much as \$11 in new investment for every \$1 of MHCDF money and created thousands of jobs. Michigan should examine HTF funding in other states and identify a robust, sustainable revenue stream for the MHCDF.
- 3. Develop a statewide housing plan.** Currently, Michigan lacks a strategy to facilitate effective communication and coordination among the multiple state agencies working to resolve the housing challenges confronting families. As a result, there are geographic gaps in availability of funding, and pressing needs such as home repairs that promote health and safety go unmet. Local communities may not be aware of all of the resources available and administrative obstacles sometimes limit deployment of funds. In developing a comprehensive housing plan, the state should identify more effective pathways to funnel existing resources, such as the Community Development Block Grant, to communities and families that will benefit the most.

## SHARING THE ROAD

**Equity is of utmost importance when it comes to building a better Michigan.** A long history of housing discrimination is one of the main drivers of racial disparities in health, homelessness and generational poverty. Racially restrictive legal documents, racist neighborhood associations, redlining in federal mortgage programs, discriminatory local zoning ordinances and predatory practices in the real estate and private lending industries have disproportionately deprived people of color of homeownership, which is the primary way that people build wealth and pass it on to their children. Decades of bad public policy have forced people of color into substandard rental housing in neighborhoods with severely limited opportunities for health, education and employment. Policies that promote access to safe, affordable homes for all are essential to ensuring everyone has a fair chance to reach their full potential.





FILL UP

# WORKERS' POCKETS

"Interestingly, this economy isn't really helping the people who *need* help. It's only helping the people who already have money."

-Sharon, Lansing

## THE ROAD AHEAD

To help workers pay their bills and put money back into communities, Michigan must:



Allow eligible taxpayers to receive a bigger income boost through a larger state Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC).



Make more working families, students, caregivers and workers eligible for the state EITC.



## TIME FOR A TUNE-UP

The EITC is an income tax credit that helps offset the effects of taxes on families with low incomes. It rewards work, helps people keep working by allowing them to afford car repairs or child care, is a proven-effective antipoverty tool, and has long-lasting positive impacts on children in families that receive it. Michigan has implemented its own EITC credit, but our credit is lower than most in other states. To build a stronger state, Michigan must keep pace and expand its EITC.



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# REPAIRING THE PROBLEM: HOW TO IMPROVE FINANCES FOR WORKERS

- 1. Increase Michigan's Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) to 20% of the federal credit or beyond.** An increase will give Michigan taxpayers with low to moderate incomes a much-needed boost. For tax year 2016, eligible taxpayers received an average credit of \$148, putting about \$114 million back into local economies. However, if the credit had been equal to 20%, those taxpayers would have received an average of \$493 per household. That would have boosted local economies by nearly \$380 million. But Michigan should not just stop there; expanding the credit beyond 20% will spark even more growth.
- 2. Expand the income eligibility to allow more families with moderate incomes to qualify for the state EITC.** In 2016, about 770,500 families received Michigan's EITC. Based on the 2017 United Way ALICE report, in 2015, a single adult required \$18,192 in annual income to afford the basic necessities. A married couple with two children required \$56,064 annually to make ends meet. This means that many Michigan families who still struggle to make ends meet continue to be ineligible for the credit.
- 3. Allow more students, caregivers and workers to qualify for the state EITC.** Because our state credit is based off of the federal credit, workers younger than 25 and over 65 must have qualifying children to receive it. This results in more students, young workers and noncustodial parents being taxed even deeper into poverty. We must join other states by allowing more childless workers to qualify by eliminating the age requirement for our state EITC.

## SHARING THE ROAD

**Equity is of utmost importance when it comes to building a better Michigan.** Due to systemic structural barriers, workers of color are often more likely to earn poverty-level wages than White workers. State-level EITCs help offset the disparate racial impact of regressive taxes like the sales tax by boosting the after-tax incomes of low-wage households. Providing an income boost to parents also has significant, long-term positive effects on children. Children in households receiving an income boost tend to do better and go further in school, and earn more as adults. As kids of color have poverty rates two to three times higher than rates for white children, the state EITC is especially important.







# FUEL FAMILIES WITH HEALTHY FOODS

"In order to go to a grocery store and get decent food, I actually have to go outside of my community."

-Melissa, Detroit

## THE ROAD AHEAD

To help residents put healthier food on the table, Michigan must:



Encourage schools to purchase healthy food grown in Michigan.



Help families with low incomes get fresh produce.



Encourage residents to build up savings by eliminating the asset test for food assistance.



## TIME FOR A TUNE-UP

One in 7 Michiganders don't have enough to eat and an estimated 1.8 million live in communities with few affordable healthy food options, leading to incalculable costs in healthcare for diet-related diseases and unfulfilled potential among students and workers. In the state's fight to end hunger and ensure proper nutrition among its residents, its robust agriculture industry is an invaluable asset. Increasing access to key nutrition programs centered on Michigan's farm bounty will empower families with low incomes to make dietary choices that reduce healthcare costs, promote academic achievement and worker productivity, and boost local economies.



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# REPAIRING THE PROBLEM: HOW TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOOD

- 1. Expand the 10 Cents a Meal program.** “10 Cents a Meal” is a farm-to-school pilot program of the Michigan Department of Education that gives schools incentive funding of up to 10 cents per meal to purchase fresh food grown in Michigan. Now in its third year, the program has spurred increased sales for more than 130 local farms and related businesses. More than 134,000 students in participating school districts have shown improvements in dietary knowledge and preference for and consumption of fresh produce. The 43 counties in which school districts are eligible to apply for the program, however, do not include Macomb, Oakland and Wayne, where nearly 40% of Michigan children age 6 to 17 live. The program must be expanded into those areas.
- 2. Expand the Double Up Food Bucks program statewide.** The price of fresh fruits and vegetables can present difficulty for shoppers trying to feed their families on a tight budget. The Double Up Food Bucks program enables people using the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to double the value of up to \$20 per day in food assistance benefits spent on fresh produce at participating farmers markets and grocery stores. By helping people stretch their SNAP dollars further, the program encourages healthier eating and frees up money in the family budget for other basic needs like healthcare, utility bills and school supplies.
- 3. Reverse the state’s decision to apply an asset test to food assistance.** To receive food assistance in Michigan, families currently cannot have more than \$5,000 in countable assets (including checking and savings accounts), with some exemptions for vehicles. This policy discourages families from saving the small amounts needed to handle temporary crises or setbacks, and has administrative costs for the state. Given already high caseloads for eligibility specialists, eliminating the asset test could streamline the state’s efforts and help families put food on the table and build up savings for emergencies.

## SHARING THE ROAD

**Equity is of utmost importance when it comes to building a better Michigan.** Because an unhealthy diet is a significant obstacle to health, academic success and earning potential, disparities in healthy food affordability and access contribute to persistent inequities in Michigan’s poverty rates. Low-income, urban neighborhoods of color have the least availability of grocery stores and supermarkets compared with both low- and high-income White communities. In addition to communities of color, children in families with low incomes, seniors, rural residents and people with disabilities are more likely to face barriers accessing fresh and healthy foods. Bolstering resources for high-quality food among underserved populations is an important step in ensuring that all Michiganders have the opportunity to live a healthy life and reach their full potential.





# MOVE THE NEEDLE ON CHILD CARE ACCESS

"We need affordable, quality day care. I'm a mom, and we need to be able to trust the people we leave our kids with."

-Kelly, Grand Rapids

## THE ROAD AHEAD

To help families get access to affordable, quality child care, Michigan must make sure that:



More families have help with child care costs.



More child care providers can keep their businesses open and provide high-quality care.



Fewer areas of the state have child care shortages.



## TIME FOR A TUNE-UP

Michigan families struggle with child care issues, but with a new influx of federal funds, our state has an unprecedented opportunity to help. In 2018, Congress approved an increase in funding for the Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG), with Michigan receiving \$63.5 million in additional funding each year. The new funds can be carried forward for several years, but so far Michigan has committed only a small percentage of the funds.



## ABOUT THE OWNER'S MANUAL FOR MICHIGAN

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# REPAIRING THE PROBLEM:

## HOW TO IMPROVE CHILD CARE ACCESS

- 1. Increase income eligibility cutoff for child care support to the federal cap of 85% of state median income.** Currently, Michigan has one of the lowest income eligibility thresholds in the country. Families cannot earn enough to offset child care costs and are not eligible for assistance. This leaves many business owners struggling to attract and retain lower-wage workers. The Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) permits states to provide subsidies to families with incomes of up to 85% of state median income, and Michigan should move toward that goal.
- 2. Increase child care subsidies to ensure that parents can afford 75% of the child care in their communities and that providers can improve quality.** The child care business is so underfunded and undervalued that providers cannot charge what it really costs to provide high-quality care, and parents with low or moderate incomes cannot afford better quality care. Federal law recommends that states set subsidy rates at levels that allow families to purchase 75% of the licensed care in their communities, and Michigan falls short of that goal.
- 3. Establish grants and contracts with providers to increase high-quality care for shortage areas.** Severe shortages of high-quality child care exist in many areas of the state—particularly for parents who work evenings, weekends, or uncertain schedules, as well as those who need care for infants and toddlers or children with special needs. Several states are using contracts and grants to purchase child care slots for these underserved families and children.

## SHARING THE ROAD

**Equity is of utmost importance when it comes to building a better Michigan.** Differences in economic and educational opportunities for families and children of color are at the core of racial and ethnic inequities. Access to high-quality child care, which is out of reach for many families with low incomes, is a proven strategy for improving equity across generations. Michigan has an opportunity to address both high levels of poverty for children of color, as well as reduce inequities in school achievement based on race and ethnicity.







# STRONG WORKERS

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## IT'S TIME TO GIVE WORKERS A JUMPSTART

Workers told us they were eager to move ahead in their jobs, but many are stalled. It's time to boost our state's workforce by making access to training and positive workplace policies a reality for all.



# CREATE A ROUTE FOR BUILDING SKILLS

"How can you have a future for children if parents aren't educated enough to get jobs that allow them to take care of their kids?"

-Maria, Grand Rapids

## THE ROAD AHEAD

To help adults get the skills they need to get ahead, Michigan should make sure:



More working adults have a postsecondary credential leading to a good-paying job.



Working adults in need of skills have access to education and training.



Postsecondary education is more affordable for working adults.



## TIME FOR A TUNE-UP

Educational level strongly influences how much money a worker will earn and the likelihood of the worker being in poverty, but only 37% of Michigan residents age 25 or older have an associate's degree or higher. Many working parents find it difficult to balance work, school and family, and those who go back to school after being in the workforce sometimes need remediation. Yet in Michigan, tuition for higher education is among the highest in the country, there is no financial aid for those who have been out of high school more than 10 years, and there is far too little adult education accessible to prepare adults with basic skills for postsecondary education or occupational training.



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# REPAIRING THE PROBLEM:

## HOW TO BUILD SKILLS IN MICHIGAN

- 1. Increase funding for adult education by at least \$10 million.** Adult education helps people catch up on skills and provides a high school equivalency credential so they can succeed in postsecondary education or occupational training. However, Michigan has cut funding in the past 20 years from \$80 million to as low as \$20 million, resulting in the closing of many programs and reduction in the number of seats in the remaining programs. Increasing funding by \$10 million would allow Michigan's education providers to serve nearly 8,000 more students.
- 2. Reinstate the Part-Time Independent Student Grant.** In 2010, Michigan eliminated the Part-Time Independent Student Grant and another grant that were the only state financial aid options available for students over age 30 to attend a public university or community college. At the time, the Part-Time Independent Student Grant helped nearly 6,000 Michigan students at a cost of \$2.6 million. Reinstating it would help older students gain skills and a college degree and enable them to attend part time so they can work and take care of their families.
- 3. Make college tuition more affordable.** As a result of steep cuts in state support for Michigan universities over the past 15 years, Michigan college students pay for 69% of university operations expenses—the highest student cost burden in the Midwest and the sixth-highest in the nation. Michigan should restore the university funding that has been cut and couple it with stronger tuition restraint or tuition reduction requirements.

## SHARING THE ROAD

**Equity is of utmost importance when it comes to building a better Michigan.** Michigan has significant racial disparities in educational attainment. Only 71% of Latinx residents have a high school diploma, compared with 85% of African American residents, 89% of Asian American residents and 92% of White residents, yet Michigan continues to underfund adult education despite evidence of its effectiveness. Plus, university education has become less and less accessible to those with low incomes (who are disproportionately people of color) due to neglect of state funding, so Michigan is not closing the racial college gap. Our state must be proactive in removing barriers and ensuring that all residents have the opportunity to build their skills and compete in the job market.





# PAVE THE WAY FOR BETTER JOBS

"We know people are supposed to be saving their money, but they have to be making enough of a living so they have extra to save. People who are working on minimum wage can't do that."

-Marian, Petoskey

## THE ROAD AHEAD

To improve job quality for all workers, Michigan must:



Make sure workers are paid for overtime hours.



Provide better minimum wage protection for tipped workers.



Guarantee paid sick time for all workers.



Ensure that workers receive adequate notice of schedule changes.



## TIME FOR A TUNE-UP

Many people show up at their jobs each day and work hard, yet have unpredictable schedules that disrupt their family life, work overtime without extra compensation, lose pay or even their jobs when they get sick, or earn less than minimum wage when tips are low. By enacting "job quality" measures, Michigan can help ensure that our state is a place in which hard work by ALL workers is respected and compensated fairly.



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# REPAIRING THE PROBLEM: HOW TO IMPROVE JOB QUALITY IN MICHIGAN



- 1. Raise the overtime threshold to \$55,000 by 2022 and adjust annually after that.** The threshold has been frozen at just \$23,660 since 2004, meaning many workers earning above that amount could be forced to work far beyond 40 hours per week without extra pay. The Michigan governor can enact this by executive order.
- 2. Phase out the separate minimum wage for tipped workers.** In occupations where workers traditionally receive tips, employers are allowed to pay a “tipped minimum wage” much lower than the regular hourly minimum wage. If that wage plus the tips do not add up to the regular minimum wage, the employer is supposed to pay the difference, yet many discourage or resist requests to do this. A 2018 ballot proposal would have phased out the separate tipped minimum wage by 2024, but the Michigan Legislature kept it from the ballot and preserved the separate wage for tipped workers.
- 3. Enact a paid sick leave law that covers all workers.** A ballot proposal in 2018 would have made nearly all workers eligible to accrue paid sick days based on the number of hours they worked. The Legislature prevented it from going to the ballot and instead excluded approximately 62% of Michigan’s workers from mandated eligibility, many of whom are in the least likely occupations to have employer-provided sick leave. The Legislature and governor should work during to extend the paid sick leave law to cover all workers.
- 4. Require employers to make work scheduling as predictable as possible.** Late-notice scheduling and sudden schedule changes can cause workers to lose anticipated wages and create child care and transportation difficulties. Michigan should enact legislation granting an employee the right to request changes to the number of work hours and the amount of advance notice for schedule assignments, require an extra hour of pay to the employee if there is a last-minute change to a scheduled shift, and require a minimum of four hours of pay if a worker is sent home before the end of the shift.

## SHARING THE ROAD

**Equity is of utmost importance when it comes to building a better Michigan.** Job quality issues particularly affect workers in occupations that pay low wages, and many of those jobs are held by people of color. The 2016 median hourly wage in Michigan was nearly \$19 for White workers, but just over \$14 for African American and Latinx workers, and a far larger share of African American and Latinx workers (17%) than of White (10%) and Asian (9%) workers would have been directly affected by an increase in the minimum wage to \$12 by 2022. Work is the best route out of financial hardship, but when a disproportional number of low-wage and low-quality jobs are held by people of color and the Michigan Legislature works to suppress improvements in these areas, it undermines the American promise of equal opportunity for all.







# PUT JUSTICE-INVOLVED RESIDENTS BACK ON THE ROAD

"People in my neighborhood who've done crimes in the past are being held back by their records. They're labeled. They can't get jobs. So how can they move forward?"

-Brian, Detroit

## THE ROAD AHEAD

To help people involved in the justice system get back on track, Michigan must:



Remove barriers that keep workers with felony records from gaining occupational credentials.



Expunge certain crimes from an individual's record after a period of time.



Stop requiring information about criminal history on initial job applications.



## TIME FOR A TUNE-UP

Becoming employed and economically mobile greatly reduces the likelihood of recidivism, yet Michigan does not use all of the tools available to help justice-involved individuals get and keep good jobs. Many private and public employers ask the question "Have you ever been convicted of a felony?" on their employment applications, attaching a stigma to the applicant without providing a chance to explain in person the circumstances of the conviction. Background checks often reveal minor or long-ago crimes that stigmatize applicants and jeopardize their employment chances. And some occupational licensing laws continue to obstruct opportunities for employment based on convictions that have nothing to do with the performance of the job duties or the population interacted with.



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# REPAIRING THE PROBLEM: HOW TO HELP JUSTICE-INVOLVED RESIDENTS THRIVE

- 1. Continue to build on and fine-tune the previous governor's removal of felony questions on occupational licensing applications.** The state must work to ensure that those who continue to be barred from certain professions due to the nature of the crime committed will have full knowledge of this before beginning a training program in that profession.
- 2. Expunge certain types of convictions and reduce burdensome paperwork and processes for the applicant on the remaining types.** Some crimes, particularly those that involved a victim, cannot be automatically expunged, but the process through which an individual can seek expungement can be made less burdensome.
- 3. Remove criminal history questions on initial job applications.** Questions about criminal history should be removed from government job (and government contractor and vendor) applications and be prohibited on private sector applications. Michigan removed such questions from state employment applications, but many cities and counties (and their contractors and vendors) continue to include the question. Furthermore, a law prohibiting local and county governments from adopting "ban the box" ordinances covering private employers should be rescinded.

## SHARING THE ROAD

**Equity is of utmost importance when it comes to building a better Michigan.** There are glaring racial disparities in criminal justice sentencing and incarceration: African Americans are incarcerated at more than five times the rate of Whites, and Michigan ranks 13th-highest in the proportion of black males who are incarcerated at any given time. This means that a disproportionate number of justice-involved jobhunters are people of color. As a matter of racial equity, Michigan must take proactive steps to reduce employment barriers for those reentering society.





# TOP-NOTCH EDUCATION

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## LET'S GIVE KIDS A BOOST

In every single community conversation we held, education was among the biggest concerns people had about Michigan. From cradle to career, kids in our state have a chance to thrive. But without the right policies and budget decisions, they'll continue to fall behind. Accelerating our work on education needs to happen now..



## JUMPSTART

# EARLY LEARNING

"Good preschool has to be a priority."

-James, Wayne County

## THE ROAD AHEAD

To help kids get the educational foundation they need, Michigan must make sure that:



All children in families with lower and moderate incomes can attend high-quality pre-schools.



Infants and toddlers with developmental delays have the services they need to ultimately succeed in school and life.



## TIME FOR A TUNE-UP

Early education is a foundation for success in school, including reading by third grade. With Michigan's Read by Grade Three law set to take effect in the 2019-2020 school year, Michigan has no time to lose in continuing to expand preschool education as part of a prenatal through third grade (P-3) continuum, along with focusing on the needs of infants and toddlers who are already showing signs of developmental delays.



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# REPAIRING THE PROBLEM:

## HOW TO IMPROVE EARLY LEARNING



- 1. Ensure that all children have access to a preschool education.** Evaluations of Michigan's state-funded preschool program, the Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP), show that children who participate score higher on early literacy and math assessments in both urban and rural areas of the state. Preschool programs affect two generations of Michiganders by providing children with the experiences they need while making it easier for parents to work to support their families.

Michigan ranks well nationally in its enrollment of 4-year-olds, but 3-year-olds are still not eligible for the GSRP. In 2016, of the 43 states with state-funded preschool programs, only 15—including Michigan—did not enroll 3-year-olds. The science is clear: learning begins at birth and more needs to be done to integrate early childhood into an educational path from cradle to career. Michigan should ensure that all children have access to a high-quality preschool education, with state funds used initially for children from families with low and moderate incomes.

- 2. Fund *Early On* services statewide.** Since passage of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Part C program in 1986, Michigan has relied primarily on federal funds for its *Early On* program, which is intended to identify and serve children from birth to age 3 who have developmental delays or disabilities. In the 2019 budget year, the Michigan Legislature approved the first state funding for *Early On*—a total of \$5 million statewide—which falls far below the estimated need of \$70 million. It's time to provide enough funding to give young children the services they need.

## SHARING THE ROAD

**Equity is of utmost importance when it comes to building a better Michigan.** Access to a high-quality early education, and the early identification of children with disabilities and delays, are both important tools for eliminating deep disparities in education for children based on race, ethnicity and income. Children who grow up in poverty are more likely to experience developmental delays, and very high percentages of young children of color are economically disadvantaged. In addition, access to a preschool education is more limited for children whose parents have low incomes, and 59% of 3- and 4-year-old Latinx children are not in preschool.







RAMP UP

# SCHOOL FUNDING

Why do we punish students for things that are out of their control? Schools need to support kids who struggle.”

-Maddie, Muskegon

## THE ROAD AHEAD

To give our kids the support they need, Michigan should:



Revise the School Aid formula to create greater equity in school funding and improve educational achievement for all students regardless of race, place or income.



Fully fund the At-Risk School Aid program to help school districts meet the higher costs of educating children who are economically disadvantaged.



## TIME FOR A TUNE-UP

Policymakers, parents, teachers, advocates and business leaders all agree that more must be done to improve education in Michigan. While the focus has been on strategies for raising test scores and improving instruction, a closer look shows that students face obstacles outside the classroom that must be overcome if all students are to succeed. As Michigan faces the first round of potential third-grade retentions based on its Read by Grade Three law, stark disparities in educational achievement based on race, ethnicity and income must be faced head on.



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# REPAIRING THE PROBLEM:

## HOW TO IMPROVE SCHOOL FUNDING



- 1. Ensure that all 3- and 4-year-olds have access to a preschool education, starting with children in families with low to moderate incomes.** High percentages of Michigan students are facing steep barriers to educational achievement that will not be resolved without intentional, intensive and highly targeted investments. The nonpartisan School Finance Research Collaborative concluded that a school funding formula that is weighted by the number of students in poverty or facing other risk factors could improve equity, and their recommendations need swift action.
- 2. Fully fund the At-Risk School Aid program.** The At-Risk School Aid program provides funds to districts based on the number of economically disadvantaged students they enroll. It is the state's current mechanism for addressing the added costs of teaching children in low-income schools and communities, but it is not fully funded. Despite increases in At-Risk funding during the 2016 to 2018 budget years, school districts currently receive only 78% of their intended allocations.

## SHARING THE ROAD

**Equity is of utmost importance when it comes to building a better Michigan.** A high-quality public education is a path to equity and the foundation of economic growth. Unfortunately, this path has been blocked for too many children of color in Michigan. Children of color are less likely to read proficiently by third grade, are more likely to be retained in grade at all levels, change schools more frequently and miss more school. Ultimately, children of color and those from families with low incomes are less likely to graduate from high school or be college- and career-ready. These disparities can be traced to public policies that have limited economic opportunity for many families and fail to recognize the added cost of teaching children who live in high-poverty neighborhoods.





# DEVELOP A ROAD MAP FOR EARLY LITERACY

"We have enormous expectations of community schools that don't have enough resources to meet the needs of kids."

-Brenda, Jackson

## THE ROAD AHEAD

To help kids become stronger readers, Michigan must:



Make sure all children can read by third grade, regardless of race, place or family income.



Create a prenatal-to-grade-three literacy initiative.



Engage parents in their children's reading success.



## TIME FOR A TUNE-UP

To address the high percentage of Michigan students who are reading below grade level in third grade, the state adopted a Read by Grade Three law that was intended to increase early interventions for students falling behind in reading, while allowing for the retention of students who remain behind at the end of third grade. The foundation for literacy is set before kindergarten, and to date, state investments in reading and family supports—beginning prenatally and continuing through third grade—have not been sufficient. Michigan must put more resources toward literacy if the state is to meet its goal of all children reading by third grade.



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# REPAIRING THE PROBLEM: HOW TO IMPROVE LITERACY IN MICHIGAN



- 1. Focus resources on school districts with the greatest disparities for children of color and those in low-income neighborhoods.** The ability of young children to read cannot be isolated from the circumstances of their births and early years, including access to prenatal and other healthcare services, adequate nutrition, parental literacy, family economic stress, and the quality of early education and child care. Among the resources needed are home visiting programs; the early identification of delays and disabilities (*Early On*); high-quality child care; voluntary preschool for all children from families with low and moderate incomes; and investments in teachers, including professional development and additional literacy coaches to improve reading instruction.
- 2. Create a prenatal-to-third-grade reading initiative.** The brain science is clear—literacy and language gaps begin in the earliest years of life when the very architecture of the brain is being created. Isolated reforms that do not create a continuum of learning—from the prenatal period through third grade—are unlikely to succeed, especially for children with the highest needs. Michigan needs a prenatal-to-third-grade reading initiative that draws on the resources of multiple state departments and is two-generational—providing needed supports to both children and their parents.
- 3. Increase parental involvement and engagement.** Parents are critical partners in efforts to improve reading by third grade, and they must be given adequate information and resources to participate effectively. The Read by Grade Three law provides a range of waivers to grade retention. The state should establish clear procedures to ensure that parents are informed about their options under the law and given the resources needed to request waivers.

## SHARING THE ROAD

**Equity is of utmost importance when it comes to building a better Michigan.** Public policies that have limited employment and housing options for many families of color have contributed to the literacy gap, and efforts to improve third-grade reading must address these disparities. More than 8 of every 10 African American students and two-thirds of Latinx students in Michigan are not proficient in English/Language Arts by the end of third grade. The stakes of failing to read at grade level by third grade have risen as the state prepares to implement the Read by Grade Three law in 2020—a law that could exacerbate disparities if Michigan fails to provide the direction, leadership and funding needed to address the root causes of the literacy gap.



# BE PART OF THE OWNER'S MANUAL

1. Sign up for updates and share your thoughts on how to drive Michigan forward: [mlpp.org/michmanual-join](https://mlpp.org/michmanual-join)
2. Follow us on Facebook to be part of the conversation and learn about events: [@MichManual](https://www.facebook.com/MichManual)
3. Visit our website to learn more and view the full manual: [mlpp.org/michmanual](https://mlpp.org/michmanual)



## TO MAKE OUR STATE GO, WE NEED A FULL TANK

For too long, our state's policy engine has been running on fumes.

Lawmakers continue to put a few bucks in the tank here and there, but it is only getting us a little further down the road. Our current \$55 billion state budget contains very little in flexible funding for state programs, and when adjusted for inflation, Michigan's General Fund spending is lower than it was in 1968, back when Steppenwolf was telling Michiganders to "get your motor running" on an 8-track player.

We know these recommendations will take significant state investment. If we're all going to make true progress and get to a better place in our state, policymakers are going to need to fill up the tank and find some ways to generate new revenue. We've got some sound recommendations for that, too. In order to put more money into the policy improvements we need, lawmakers should:

- Make sure Michigan's taxes and fees are fair and bring in revenues to fund these priorities.
- Review state spending.
- Expand sales taxes to services.
- Eliminate the harmful triggered income tax rate cut that disproportionately benefits wealthy taxpayers.
- Resist further tax cuts.
- Implement a graduated income tax.
- Ensure businesses are paying their fair share of taxes.

