

# MICHIGAN STRONG:

*A Stronger Future Starts Today*

**Michigan House Democrats have always known that how we support each other is the greatest test of who we are as a people. And, the COVID-19 crisis has shown much more work is needed. Our families, students, small businesses and every member of our critical workforce must receive the support they need when they need it most.**

**When it is safe to remove the shelter in place restrictions, our thorough plan will address many critical challenges, support needs and strengthen our communities and democracy. The road before us is not an easy one. But it is one that we will walk together.**

## A Strong and Healthy Michigan

Michigan House Democrats have always believed quality and affordable health care should be available to everyone. And, economic status should not matter. The COVID-19 crisis has proven the enormous gaps in our health care system. These gaps have real life and death outcomes for Michiganders whether they're insured or uninsured. And, we must address access and disparities in our urban and rural communities as a top priority.

**Michigan House Democrats are committed to improving health care and expanding access by:**

- Providing free COVID-19 testing, treatment and vaccinations for all Michiganders.
- Expanding Healthy Michigan to provide quality and affordable health care for everyone without insurance.
- Increasing mental health access with a dedicated hotline for frontline and essential workers.
- Providing dedicated funding to cover COVID-19 costs to continue hospital operations and the resources, equipment and staff needed in a safe working environment.
- Establishing standards for hospitals and other health care facilities to safely reopen for routine and elective services.
- Forming a statewide contact tracing task force and funding the program to ensure our readiness in the future.



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## Access to Clean Air and Water

Air quality always has been important for the health and well-being of Michiganders. The COVID-19 public health crisis now brings a more urgent need to address air pollution and prohibit water shutoffs during a state of emergency.

### Michigan House Democrats will strengthen environmental protections by:

- Prohibiting permit requests that will increase pollutants being released.
- Prohibiting all water shutoffs and providing a long-term funding solution to ensure clean water for all Michiganders.

## Safeguards to Help with Basic Needs

The COVID-19 crisis has further increased the financial struggles for many Michiganders and families across our state. Having the money to make mortgage or rent payments and purchase food, prescriptions, childcare and other daily needs are important every day, and especially during an emergency.

### Michigan House Democrats firmly believe providing safeguards help Michiganders, working families and our economy, and will provide these protections by:

- Investing in the staffing and technology to speed up unemployment processing.
- Increasing payments for all workers including those who receive tips.
- Stopping foreclosures, utility shutoffs, evictions, defaults, student loan payments during a state of emergency.
- Providing food and nutrition assistance program funding, allowing online Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) purchases and expanding the Double Up Food Bucks program.
- Establishing cleaning standards and safe distancing measures to create safe workplaces and prioritizing employees on leave return to work first.
- Expanding earned paid sick leave to cover all workers who are exposed or have contracted COVID-19 during quarantine and treatment.
- Expanding internet access across Michigan and offering an affordable service option for low-income, seniors and other vulnerable populations.
- Requiring auto insurance rate rebates, prohibiting the use of credit scores and assessing the same garage rates across Michigan.
- Establishing a health insurance rebate program.
- Preventing price gouging, robocall scamming, elder abuse to protect consumers and providing the required funding.
- Restoring the Earned Income Tax Credit to 20 percent for working people with low to moderate income.

## Protecting Those Who Protect and Serve Us

Every day our brave and dedicated first responders — the men and women who are firefighters, police officers, paramedics and health care professionals — put their lives on the line to protect and serve us.

During this health crisis, other essential workers — grocery store workers, truck and bus drivers, food processors, gas station, postal and correction workers and many more — courageously answered the call. They're protecting and serving us while putting the well-being of themselves, their families and communities at risk. Now, it is our responsibility to protect them.

### Michigan House Democrats will protect frontline and essential workers by:

- Establishing emergency funding for safety and personal protection equipment.
- Requiring rapid testing and priority for first responders, medical care professionals and other frontline and essential workers.
- Providing workers' compensation coverage for COVID-19 illness and ensuring the presumption of contraction protections.
- Requiring hazard pay for frontline workers.
- Establishing administrative leave with full pay for COVID-19 related absences due to exposure, quarantine, treatment and recovery and prohibiting disciplinary action.
- Ensuring childcare is available for essential workers.
- Increasing direct care workers hourly rates including home health and state psychiatric workers.

## Investing in Education and Closing the Divide

With the early closure of K-12 school buildings, students, parents and teachers need the resources and ability to continue the learning outside of the classroom or school facilities. For many communities, technology and internet access are significant challenges. And, countless students with different learning styles may have difficulty outside of the classroom.

Student success remains our key priority. Providing our teachers, educators and staff, the resources to continue educating and care for themselves and their families is necessary for student success. All students must have the same opportunity to succeed, and resources must be equitably distributed across our state.

### **Michigan House Democrats firmly believe providing safeguards help Michiganders, working families and our economy, and Michigan House Democrats will continue to stand with students and teachers by:**

- Requiring equitable technology and internet access and teacher support.
- Requiring local school boards and ISDs to determine the learning and individual instruction.
- Providing a one-time special education fund for reimbursement to school districts that provide tailored services.
- Establishing a pathway for a school-based health clinic at every school.
- Establishing continual pay and benefits for all teachers, educators, staff and hourly K-12 employees during a state of emergency shutdown.
- Using the current early warning process to identify school districts under financial stress and providing emergency loan forgiveness or other financing options.
- Establishing dedicated funding to reimburse educators for incurred costs for distance learning.

## Keeping Neighborhood Businesses Strong

During the COVID-19 public health crisis response, independent retailers, hair salons, barber shops, bakeries and restaurants who employ their neighbors were closed. While any business closure creates economic waves, the impact to neighborhood businesses and their communities can be devastating.

### **Michigan House Democrats will continue to support neighborhood businesses by:**

- Providing loan and grant assistance and creating a fund for neighborhood businesses, seasonal and majority-minority owned businesses.
- Expanding the MEDC Small Business Relief Program to expedite assistance.
- Establishing a pandemic fund to provide a “fresh start” by forgiving back-payments of rent and mortgage for individuals and businesses.
- Requiring standards for safe reopening and customer interactions.
- Providing short-term funding that reduces unemployment benefits as workers’ wages return or funding is depleted.

## Strengthening Our Democracy

In uncertain times, leadership matters. And, electing our leaders is everyone's responsibility. Ensuring all eligible Michiganders participate in the election process strengthens our democracy.

Whenever events occur that require the State Capitol closure for weather related, a public health crisis or other disaster, the Michigan Legislature must continue to work and provide transparency without endangering the public's health.

### **Michigan House Democrats continue to support our Democracy by:**

- Requiring all voters to receive an absentee voter ballot with a postage paid return envelope and counting the ballots if mailed by election day.
- Making Election Day a state holiday and providing funding necessary to ensure public health at polling places.
- Expanding early voting options to increase participation in elections.
- Implementing Temporary Rules in the Michigan House of Representatives during a state of emergency to allow the use of virtual technology to continue critical legislative work.

**The COVID-19 pandemic is one of the greatest challenges we've faced in a generation. It has upset the lives of Michiganders and families in ways no one could have imagined. The measure of our character as Michiganders is not the size of the challenge before us. It is our spirit and resolve in overcoming it. Our enduring determination defines all of us who call the Great Lakes State home. We're ready to continue our work on behalf of all Michiganders, working families and for our children's future.**