

# A PATH TOWARD OUR FUTURE

## - WORKING WITH THE LEGISLATURE IN 2016 -

Gov. Rick Snyder and the Michigan Legislature worked together to make our state a better place for all Michiganders, and now we have a clear path toward our future.

### **Pre-Third Grade Reading**

Gov. Rick Snyder signed legislation ensuring Michigan students will become better readers before completing the third grade, which greatly increases their chance of academic success in later years.

Supports for struggling students are being created that include individualized plans, literacy coaches, and targeted reading intervention programs, among other things, to provide students who fall behind the assistance they need to be successful.

The bill also requires principals or administrators to provide teachers with professional development programs that will assist them in improving reading proficiency. The new guidelines go into effect for the 2017-2018 kindergarten class.

Third-grade reading proficiency has been a priority for Gov. Snyder for the last several years. In the summer of 2015, a bipartisan group of legislators and education stakeholders met to discuss changes to the state's literacy policies. This legislation is the final piece to completing the work of that group.

### **Detroit Public Schools**

Lawmakers from all across the state came together to absolve Detroit Public Schools of its past debt, investing \$617 million to provide a clean slate for education in the city. The bills signed in June restored oversight of the new school district to a traditional school board, while creating a framework for academic accountability and an environment for Detroit to attract and retain the best teachers for its children. The locally-elected board is now reviewing options for a school superintendent.

Detroit's existing Financial Review Commission, which has already been successful in the city, will monitor the district's finances to protect taxpayers and students.

### **Energy Solutions**

Landmark energy policy reforms that will begin in 2017 will help Michigan residents save on their electric bills, ensure reliability, and advance clean energy. Gov. Snyder worked with lawmakers on solutions to reduce energy waste by providing incentives for utilities to enhance current programs and meet more needs from the cheapest, cleanest resource.

The legislation ensures a reliable energy supply by requiring all electric providers to have adequate resources to avoid blackouts/brownouts, using a market-driven approach. Also, allowing regulated utilities to use on-bill financing programs for utility customers will allow them to pay for energy waste reduction projects (like new insulation) through an itemized charge on their utility bills.



## **Autonomous Vehicles and Mobility**

A major priority for both Gov. Snyder and Michigan lawmakers in 2016 was enacting a regulatory framework to continue the success of mobility and intelligent vehicle growth. Signed in December 2016, new laws allow operation of autonomous vehicles on Michigan roads, where before only testing of these vehicles by manufacturers was permitted. The bill also allows for automated vehicle platoons, where vehicles travel together at electronically coordinated speeds, and authorizes on-demand autonomous vehicle networks for use by companies such as Google, Uber and Lyft.

## **Improving Veterans Homes**

Legislation signed by the governor in early 2017 creates a new semi-autonomous state authority within the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs. The nine-member Authority will include the director of the DMVA and eight members appointed by the governor for four-year terms.

The panel will be able to solicit funds and issue bonds for the purpose of purchasing or leasing land and facilities to construct new veterans' homes, or renovate existing facilities. The Authority also will be responsible for administering any veterans' homes built or acquired, ensuring that the state's veteran facilities are incorporating industry best practices, which will lead to higher quality long-term care for Michigan's veterans.

## **Opioid Abuse**

Michigan, like many other states, is combatting a drug epidemic that is having dire consequences on its population. Bipartisan "Good Samaritan" legislation was signed that will allow Michiganders of all ages to seek medical assistance for themselves or others without fear of prosecution in the case of a potential drug overdose.

In addition, new laws make drugs that combat opioid overdoses available without a prescription, and allow schools to have and administer opioid antagonists.

## **First Responder Benefits**

The governor signed legislation in 2016 extending medical benefits to surviving families of Michigan first responders who die in the line of duty. The new law expands on current benefits to include 60 months of health care in addition to an existing one-time payment. This is just one way to provide more support for families of public safety officers who pay the ultimate sacrifice when protecting the health and safety of Michigan residents.

## **Reforming "Zero Tolerance"**

School administrators have more freedom in disciplinary actions, beginning with the upcoming 2017-18 school year, after the governor signed legislation that eliminates mandatory expulsion and suspension.

The school board will have more options to review intent and past behavior of a student before deciding on appropriate punishment. This aligns with Gov. Snyder's goals of "smarter justice" – addressing the root cause of an individual's behavior rather than just punishing them.

