

MICHIGAN CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION

2024 ANNUAL REPORT





From the Chair

Greetings,

I am honored to have served as chair of the Michigan Civil Rights Commission throughout 2024, and I am proud to share with you this report outlining the accomplishments of the Commission and the Michigan Department of Civil Rights (MDCR) during the last fiscal year.

FY 2024 saw MDCR taking record numbers of complaints, and yet at the same time driving down the backlog of older cases that had resulted from chronic under-funding and under-staffing. With an influx of funds and new investigators joining MDCR's ranks, the Enforcement Division was able to reduce the backlog by an astounding 57 percent.

Threats to civil rights have always existed, and FY 2024 was no exception. What was different, however, was the growing number of allies at all levels who joined us in seeking solutions and pushing for protections for the most vulnerable among us. Throughout the year, the Commission and the department were able to leverage the power of allyship to advance the vital civil rights issues of fair housing, hate and bias, and voting rights.

With the help of the MDCR team, the Commission held a series of public hearings to take testimony from people on their lived experiences of housing discrimination, insights that informed the 2024 Civil Rights Summit in June. At that gathering, with the help of our allies and experts, we honed in on a number of important policy recommendations to combat housing discrimination statewide.

In September, MDCR hosted the 14th annual Conference Against Hate and Bias, with the theme "In Allyship, We Rise: Together Against Hate." Allies in law enforcement, elected officials, and community leaders came together to examine specific types of hate and bias, and to explore potential solutions.

In response to the Commission's 2022 resolution calling for education on voting rights, MDCR launched a comprehensive Voting Rights Initiative. This major effort aimed to reach vulnerable communities with crucial voter information and resources. Our allies played a pivotal role in this work, utilizing MDCR-produced digital toolkits to share newsletter articles and social media messages with their own extensive networks. This greatly expanded the reach and impact of our initiatives. Whether you heard us on the radio, saw our videos on social media, or noticed our "Voting is a Civil Right" billboards along the highways, you were touched by the far-reaching effects of this important campaign. Building strong alliances with people and organizations throughout our state will continue to be a focus for the Commission and the department going forward into the new year. I look forward to working with all of you to make Michigan a safer and more equitable state in 2025.

Gloria Lara
Chair, Michigan Civil Rights Commission

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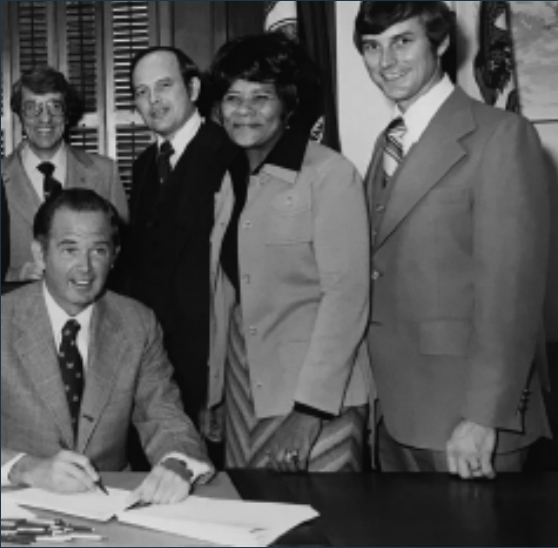
In 1964, Michigan became the first state in the nation to include civil rights protections in its constitution. Article 5, Section 29 calls on the Michigan Civil Rights Commission to “...investigate alleged discrimination against any person because of race, religion, color or national origin in the enjoyment of the civil rights guaranteed by law...” The Michigan Department of Civil Rights was created in 1965 to carry out the work of the Commission. Passage of the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act and its expansion, the Persons with Disabilities Civil Rights Act, and the Crown Act further clarified the specific protections guaranteed under Michigan law.”

MDCR Vision

To eliminate discrimination and promote equity through engagement, education and enforcement. To be the voice of civil rights in Michigan.

MDCR Mission

The mission of the Michigan Department of Civil Rights, the operational arm of the Michigan Civil Rights Commission, is enshrined in the Michigan Constitution: to investigate alleged discrimination and to secure the equal protection of civil rights. The Department fulfills its mission by investigating and resolving complaints of discrimination and promoting voluntary compliance with civil rights laws. The Department extends its reach by building coalitions around common issues of concern and being a full partner in the functioning of state government.



State Representatives Daisy Elliott and Mel Larsen with Governor William Milliken as he signs the Elliott- Larsen Civil Rights Act into law on January 13, 1977.



State Representative Daisy Elliott in front of the Michigan capitol building in Lansing. With the support of State Representative Mel Larsen, Elliott was the author of the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act.

Who We Are

The Michigan Civil Rights Commission (MCRC) has one of the most important roles in state government —so important that it is enshrined in the Michigan Constitution: to investigate alleged discrimination and to secure the equal protection of civil rights. The Michigan Department of Civil Rights (MDCR) serves as the operational arm of the Commission. MDCR is structured into the following divisions: Community Engagement and Education; Disability Rights and Compliance; Diversity, Equity and Inclusion; Enforcement; Finance and Management Services; and Strategic Initiatives and Public Information. MDCR is also home to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Compliance Office for the State of Michigan; the Division on Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing; the Council for Government and Education on Equity and Inclusion; the Michigan Service Animal Registry; and a number of strategic civil rights initiatives.



Governor Romney swears in Damon Keith and John Feikens, the first co-chairs of the Michigan Civil Rights Commission.

Bipartisan Constitutional Convention Revises Michigan Constitution to Create MCRC and MDCR

In 1961 and 1962, the Michigan Constitutional Convention, a bipartisan elected body, led an effort to revise the state's governmental framework document. Its members were elected from state House and Senate districts. On December 5, 1961, Detroit delegates Lillian Hatcher, Daisy Elliott and Coleman A. Young submitted Proposal No. 1522 and 1523 to their convention colleagues. Proposal No. 1522 provided for a Civil Rights Commission with “enforcement powers to eliminate discrimination and segregation based on race, religion, color, national origin or ancestry in employment, housing, education, public accommodations and other such rights, privileges or immunities as are guaranteed under this Constitution.” Proposal No. 1523 prescribed how the Commission should be constituted and the procedures that it was to follow in exercising its authority. Both proposals were later adopted by the 144-member body, approved by state voters on April 1, 1963, and became a significant set of provisions included in the revised Michigan Constitution. Accordingly, MCRC and MDCR began its work in 1964.

What We Do

Enforce Civil Rights Laws

The primary mission of the MCRC and MDCR is to investigate complaints of discrimination in employment, education, housing, public accommodation, law enforcement and public service. The alleged discrimination must have taken place within the last 180 days and must be based on religion, race (including hair texture and protective hairstyles), color, disability, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, height, weight, arrest record, genetic information, and/or familial status. When conducting an investigation, MDCR is neutral. If the investigation shows that discrimination has occurred, MDCR will attempt to reach a resolution between the parties. If they cannot agree on a resolution, MDCR will enforce civil rights law and may bring a charge before the Michigan Civil Rights Commission.

Prevent Discrimination

MDCR is committed to preventing discrimination and working to bridge gaps in understanding and build trust. The Department engages with community and faith-based organizations, advocates and law enforcement agencies to address civil rights issues and build partnerships to promote voluntary compliance with civil rights laws. MDCR offers training on a range of topics including cultural

competency, implicit bias, disability, sexual harassment, housing discrimination and civil rights law. We also partner with communities to examine racial and ethnic disparities and the role they play in Michigan's economic and social environment. The MDCR Divisions on Community Engagement and Education; Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing; Disability Rights and Compliance; Diversity, Equity and Inclusion; and the Enforcement Division's Housing Unit are all responsible for outreach, engagement, training and education in their respective areas of focus.

Serve Communities

MDCR works to support diversity and inclusion, and to serve the needs of specific residents.

- The Division on Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing affirms the indisputable rights of Michiganders who are deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing to secure effective communication. The Division receives input from a thirteen-member Advisory Council appointed by the Governor. The Division provides support and information to Michiganders who are deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing and entities that serve them.

- The State of Michigan Office of ADA Compliance works to ensure all aspects of Michigan government are in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and other state and federal disability-related laws.

- Through our membership on the Michigan Interagency Migrant Services Committee (IMSC) MDCR promotes, tracks and reports on recommendations to improve conditions for Michigan's

migrant and seasonal farmworkers and their families. Committee members are state and federal agencies that provide services to farmworkers, non-profits, educational institutions and representatives of grower interests.

- At their May 23, 2022, meeting, the Michigan Civil Rights Commission passed a resolution calling on MDCR to establish a Voting Rights Initiative (VRI).

Key Partnerships and Initiatives

- Advocates and Leaders for Police and Community Trust (ALPACT) brings together law enforcement and community leaders to build trust and facilitate communication and cooperation.

- The Michigan Alliance Against Hate Crimes (MIAAHC) works to eliminate hate and bias incidents in Michigan. Partners include state and federal law enforcement and criminal justice agencies, victim support professionals and anti-bias advocates from the U.S. Department of Justice, Michigan State Police, Prosecuting Attorneys Association of Michigan and others.

- MDCR Council for Government and Education on Equity and Inclusion is a statewide voluntary network of local government and education leaders

working to achieve equity and advance opportunities for all by:

- Making a commitment to achieve racial equity and inclusion.

- Focusing on the power and influence of our own institutions and communities.

- Working in partnership with others to achieve these goals. The Council is also the body that is responsible for overseeing and implementing the recommendations in the 2021 MCRC report, Education Equity in Michigan.

- MDCR created and administers Michigan's Voluntary Service Animal Identification program. The program offers an identification card and patch for qualifying applicants with disabilities and their service animals. Participation is free and voluntary.

Meet The Commission

Gloria E. Lara, Chair

Chair Gloria Lara is Executive Director of the Lakeshore Ethnic Diversity Alliance, a Holland, MI based non-profit organization which works to build bridges between organizations and individuals throughout our communities and across the state, helping to educate and engage all of us in moving forward a vision of racial equity. Lara previously served as the chief executive officer of the Michigan Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and the Girl Scouts of Michigan Shore to Shore. She also held executive-level positions at Chrysler Corporation as well as at major automotive suppliers. A native of Los Angeles, CA, Lara earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Business Administration with a concentration in accounting from California State University, Fullerton, and a Master of Business Administration degree from Harvard Business School in Boston, MA.



David Worthams, Vice - Chair

David Worthams is the Director of Employment Policy for the Michigan Manufacturers Association (MMA) and is a member of MMA's government affairs team representing over 1,700 Michigan-based manufacturers. Previously, he was Vice President of Policy for the Michigan Bankers Association; a Legislative Associate for the Michigan Municipal League; the Deputy Chief of Staff/Legislative Director for former State Senator Judson Gilbert, II; and served on the central staffs for two former Michigan House Speakers. Additionally, Worthams served as President of JCI Kalamazoo (Kalamazoo Junior Chamber/ Jaycees), President of JCI Michigan (Michigan Junior Chamber/Jaycees) and is a member and Vice-Chair of Equality Michigan. He holds a master's in legal studies from Kaplan University and a BA in Public Administration from Western Michigan University.





Luke R. Londo, Secretary

Luke R. Londo is a member of the Hazel Park City Council, appointed to the office in 2021 and subsequently elected to a full term. He is also a communications professional servicing two philanthropic organizations in Detroit that are dedicated to improving housing stability, expanding arts and culture, increasing access to public spaces, bridging the digital divide and building economic mobility for Detroit residents. Londo previously served as the Director of Constituent Services for the late Congressman Dan Benishek, M.D., and as a Constituent Relations Representative for the Michigan Department of Attorney General under Attorney General Bill Schuette. He is a graduate of Northern Michigan University in Marquette, where he grew up, obtaining a Bachelor of Science in Political Science. He is also currently pursuing his Master of Public Administration from his alma mater.



Regina Marie Gasco

Regina Marie Gasco, of Petoskey, is the chairperson of the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians. She has served on the Little Traverse Bay Bands Tribal Council for 13 years, previously as secretary and legislative leader for the council. She also is a member of the Board of Directors of the Inter-Tribal Council of Michigan, Inc.



Portia L. Roberson

Portia Roberson is the Chief Executive Officer of Focus: HOPE, a Detroit-based non-profit organization providing education and training for underrepresented minorities and others. Previously, Roberson served as the Group Executive of the City of Detroit's Civil Rights, Inclusion and Opportunity Department and as Corporation Counsel for the City of Detroit. Prior to her work with the City of Detroit, she worked in the White House Domestic Policy Council as the Strong Cities, Strong Communities Lead, as well as Director of the Office of Intergovernmental and Public Liaison under U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder.



Zenna Faraj Elhasan

Zenna Faraj Elhasan is the general counsel at The Kresge Foundation and serves as secretary for the foundation's board of trustees. She is responsible for managing the overall legal affairs of the foundation, supports the development and enforcement of foundation policies and practices, supports the board on governance matters and manages outside counsel relationships. Previously, Elhasan served as corporation counsel for Wayne County. Prior to her work with the county, she served as judicial magistrate and director of probation for the 20th District Court in Dearborn Heights. She also was a partner at Allen Brothers, PLLC where she was assistant city attorney for the city of Hamtramck. She is an active member of the State Bar of Michigan, the Detroit Bar Association Foundation and the Michigan Muslim Bar Association.



Rosann L. Barker

Rosann L. Barker of Detroit is the COO of Connor Creek Life Solutions, whose mission is to provide treatment services to individuals with mental illness and co-occurring substance use disorders. Barker holds a Bachelor of Social Work from Marygrove College and a Master of Healthcare Administration from Siena Heights University.



Richard Corriveau

Richard Corriveau, of Northville, is a trial attorney and the president of Richard J. Corriveau Law, P.C. Corriveau is a veteran of the United States military and previously worked as a public-school teacher and an adjunct professor. He holds a Bachelor of Arts in English from Michigan State University, a Master of Arts in Education and Psychology from the University of Michigan, and a Juris Doctor degree from the University of Detroit Law School.

Marking a **Milestone** **Anniversary**

As MCRC Turns 60, Commissioners Celebrate the Best Among Us

The Michigan Civil Rights Commission commemorated their 60th anniversary with a breakfast reception and award ceremony in Lansing on December 13, 2023. At the event, Commissioners celebrated their unique history and honored four individuals and one organization for their commitment to civil rights.

“We owe it to every person who has marched or struggled over the last 60 years to continue the fight,” said Commission Chair Portia Roberson. “In this time when it is sometimes controversial to even accurately portray historical events, it is all the more critical that we come together to acknowledge this anniversary.”

Michigan was the first state in the nation to include civil rights protections in its constitution. Article 5, Section 29 of the Michigan Constitution calls on the Michigan Civil Rights Commission to “... investigate alleged discrimination against any person because of race, religion, color or national origin in the enjoyment of the civil rights guaranteed by law...” Passage of the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act and the Persons with Disabilities Civil Rights Act further clarified the specific protections guaranteed under Michigan law.

At the 60th anniversary ceremony, the Commission recognized the following individuals and one organization for their contributions to civil rights.



2023 John Feikens Award for Organizational Civil Rights Leadership: Detroit Branch NAACP

From courtroom lawsuits to boardroom negotiations, from picket lines to economic boycotts, from schoolrooms to factory floors, the Detroit Branch NAACP has demanded justice and civil rights since its inception.



2023 Damon J. Keith Award for Individual Civil Rights Leadership: Duncan Wyeth, Disability Rights Advocate

Duncan Wyeth has been an advocate for disability rights for more than thirty years, including serving as the Executive Director of the Michigan Commission on Disability Concerns.



**2023 Burton I. Gordin
Award for Civil Rights
Courage: Michelle
P. Crockett, Miller
Canfield**

Michelle P. Crockett leads Miller Canfield's hiring of all attorneys; recruitment; diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) initiatives; mentoring; and professional development programs.



**2023 Persons With
Disabilities Civil
Rights Act Advocacy
Award: Jamie Junior,
Disability Network of
Wayne County**

Jamie Junior is a dedicated disability rights advocate who serves as the Advocacy and Community Education Coordinator with the Disability Network Wayne County Detroit.



**2023 Elliott-Larsen
Civil Rights Act Award
for Public Service
Leadership: Senator
Sarah Anthony**

Throughout her 20-year public service career, Senator Sarah Anthony has fought for equity and opportunity for all Michiganders, especially for Michigan's most vulnerable residents.



Members of the Commission gathered with Kamilia Landrum, Executive Director of the Detroit Branch NAACP, the agency honored with the 2023 John Feikens Award for Organizational Civil Rights Leadership. Left to right: Vice Chair Zenna Elhasan, Commissioner Luke Londo, Commission Chair Portia Roberson, Kamilia Landrum, Secretary Gloria Lara, Commissioner David Worthams, and Commissioner Richard Corriveau.



Director Johnson addresses attendees at the Commission's 60th anniversary gathering in Lansing.

The Dual Duties of **Lamont Satchel**

Attorney Lamont Satchel serves in two important capacities: legal advisor to the Michigan Civil Rights Commission and General Counsel for the Michigan Department of Civil Rights.

“It is exciting when you consider the actions taken by the commission that safeguard the civil rights of Michigan citizens,” said Satchel, “including resolutions condemning racist theories inimical to the welfare of minorities; supporting bans on criminal defenses that excuse violence against LGBTQ+ individuals; prohibiting income discrimination in housing; supporting an individual’s right to declare their chosen identity; and advocating for government action to eliminate potential discrimination through the use of Artificial Intelligence.”

“It is one of my greatest professional honors to serve as General Counsel for the MDCR and legal advisor for the MCRC,” said Satchel. “These entities grapple with the civil rights issues of the day and diligently work to enforce and protect civil rights for the people of Michigan.”



Michigan Civil Rights Commission Calls for Action

On a Myriad of Issues, From the Use of AI to the Rights of Non-binary Students and Beyond

For the Michigan Civil Rights Commission, FY 2024 was marked by wide-ranging policy discussions and proposals covering some of the most dynamic, cutting-edge issues impacting the civil rights of Michigan residents. It was also a year when MDCR took action to implement Commission directives on issues like housing discrimination and voting rights. (Articles covering how Commission resolutions led to direct action may be found elsewhere in this report.)

Early in FY 2024, the Commission held the first of a series of public hearings to take testimony from people with direct experience of housing discrimination, either through their own lived experience, or through their efforts to protect the rights of people who face discrimination when buying, renting, financing or selling a home. The three in-person and one virtual hearing helped the Commission zero in on the most salient issues to tackle in the 2024 Civil Rights Summit on Fair Housing held in Detroit in June. The hearings, presided over by Commission Chair Gloria Lara and previous chair Portia Roberson, were eye opening for Commissioners and MDCR leaders.

“For as long as it has been in existence, the Michigan Civil Rights Commission has proclaimed the vital importance of fair housing,” said Chair Lara. “While no one can deny that we have made progress toward building a more equitable society, we still fall far short of achieving it.”

[Find a detailed article on the 2024 Civil Rights Summit on Fair Housing here.](#)

October 23, 2023: Commission Takes on Driver’s Licenses for Undocumented Residents, Dynamic Character Legislation, and Rights for Non-Binary Students

At their October 23, 2023, meeting in Thompsonville, the Michigan Civil Rights Commission tackled a packed agenda, passing resolutions on driver’s licenses for undocumented individuals and concerns with Dynamic Character legislation that would require replacing the current accessible parking graphic. They also unanimously passed two motions to seek legal opinions on issues facing transgender and non-binary students.

Commissioner Lara introduced a proposed [resolution supportive of providing residents access to driver’s licenses](#) regardless of undocumented status.

The Commission also unanimously passed a resolution outlining concerns over Dynamic Character legislation, which would mandate MDCR to spearhead a plan to replace the current accessibility graphic with a more dynamic image. Read the complete [resolution](#) to learn why Commissioners believe this effort may be in violation of federal law.

In other action, the Commission unanimously passed two motions offered by Commissioner Luke Londo. One requests a legal opinion on whether denying transgender students access to restrooms that align with their gender identity violates the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act or other laws. The second was a request for a legal opinion on whether it is a violation of trans and non-binary students' civil rights under ELCRA to refuse to address them by their chosen pronouns and names.

The Commission also decided on their issue priorities for 2024: voting rights, environmental justice; diversity, equity and inclusion discrimination (DEI) with a focus on artificial intelligence (A.I.); and juvenile justice.

January 22, 2024: Commission Elects Officers, Establishes Priority Issue Committees for 2024



Newly elected MCRC officers for 2024, left to right: Commissioner David Worthams, Vice-Chair; Commissioner Gloria Lara, Chair; and Commissioner Luke Londo, Secretary.

At their first meeting of 2024, the Commission elected new officers and established committees to tackle the Commission's priority issue areas for 2024.

Commissioner Gloria Lara was elected to chair the Commission in 2024. She will serve as chair through the first meeting of 2025 when the body will again elect officers for the year ahead.

"I look forward to serving as Chair in what is an exciting time for the Commission, particularly as we enter an election year with so many issues in the forefront that impact what we do," said Chair-Elect Lara. "I ask for your help, your suggestions and more exemplary work from both the Commission and the department in the year ahead."

Also elected as officers in 2024 were Commissioner David Worthams and Commissioner Luke Londo. Worthams will serve as Vice-Chair of the Commission and Londo will serve as Secretary.

At their Oct. 23, 2023, meeting, the Commission voted on priority issue areas for 2024 and established committees to take the lead on these issues. At the January 2024 meeting, Commissioners volunteered to serve on the three committees.

- **Voting Rights:** Commissioner David Worthams was named chair of the Voting Rights committee. He will be joined by Commissioners Portia Roberson and Richard Corriveau.
- **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion:** Commissioner Luke Londo will chair the DEI committee, with Commissioners Rosann Barker and Gloria Lara also serving.
- **Juvenile Justice:** Commissioner Zenna Elhasan will chair the committee on Juvenile Justice. She will be joined by Commissioners David Worthams and Chair Gloria Lara.



Left: Outgoing MCRC Chair, Portia Roberson, passes the gavel to 2024 MCRC Chair, Gloria Lara.

April 29, 2024: MCRC Takes a Stand on A.I. and Other Emerging Civil Rights Issues

At their April 29 meeting on the campus of Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo, the Commission voted on a robust roster of resolutions, taking positions on four significant civil rights issues facing the state, and outlining changes to the way the Commission and MDCR conduct business.

In the policy-focused resolutions, the Commission:

- [Condemned the Great Replacement Theory](#);
- Called for a transparent, research-based approach in [the use of artificial intelligence \(AI\) in policing](#);
- [Supported a ban on the gay panic defense](#); and
- Called for [legislation facilitating the selection and declaration of gender identity](#).

“The resolutions passed by the Commission today show the breadth and scope of our commitment to protecting the civil rights of the people of Michigan,” said Commission Chair Lara.

In addition to the resolutions on policy, the Commission passed resolutions on several administrative issues, including guidelines on adoption of Commission resolutions, a policy on amicus briefs and development of an amicus brief request form, and a proposed amendment to the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act to allow for virtual meetings.

The Commission also passed a resolution in support of submitting amendments to the rules under which the Commission operates to the Michigan Office for Administrative Hearings and Rules (MOAHR). These resolutions can be found under [Resolutions/Position Statements](#) on the MDCR website, Michigan.gov/MDCR.



Andrew Minegar of MIRS interviews Director Johnson on issues of A.I. and civil rights at the Commission meeting in Kalamazoo on April 29, 2024.

July 22, 2024: MCRC Supports Fair Housing Legislation, Calls on MDCR to Develop Guiding Principles on Use of AI

At their quarterly meeting in Escanaba on Monday, July 22, the Commission passed a [resolution in support of House Bill 4878](#), the Michigan Fair Chance Access to Housing Act, to ban landlords from discriminating against prospective renters with criminal backgrounds. They also directed the department to develop a set

of guiding principles for non-discriminatory use of Artificial Intelligence (AI), based on their unanimously passed resolution on the issue at their April meeting.

“HB 4878 and its companion bills take on one manifestation of housing discrimination taking place in communities across Michigan: landlords who reject prospective renters on the basis of a past criminal conviction,” said Commission Chair Lara. “We support H.B. 4878 and urge the legislature to give it swift passage and send it to Governor Whitmer for her signature.”

The Commission also unanimously supported a proposal from Commission Secretary Luke Londo directing MDCR to prepare a set of [five guiding principles](#) “...to address the non-discriminatory use and application of Artificial Intelligence in areas aligned with the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act and the Michigan Persons with Disabilities Act.”

The directive states that the guidance should include “...a mandate for proactive engagement by the executive and legislative branches of government in the regulation, education and monitoring of the development, application and impact of Artificial Intelligence on the civil rights of Michigan citizens.”

Commissioners also heard from Michelle O’Kelly from Michigan Department of Natural Resources, and Joe Thiel, CEO of Innovate Marquette SmartZone and Interim Chairman of the Outdoor Recreation Innovation Action Network. The two provided an overview of their respective efforts to help make Michigan’s state parks and other outdoor recreation areas accessible to people with disabilities.

Also at the July 22 meeting, Chair Gloria Lara presented MDCR Executive Director John E. Johnson, Jr. with a certificate commemorating his ten years of service to the state of Michigan, including his leadership of MDCR as well as service as the Executive Director of the Michigan Legislative Black Caucus.



Members of the 2023 Michigan Civil Rights Commission, L to R: David Worthams, Richard Corriveau, Gloria Lara, Regina Gasco, Portia Roberson, Zenna Elhasan, Luke Londo, and Rosann Barker.



Commissioner Rosann Barker, Vice-Chair David Worthams, and Chair Gloria Lara at the April 29 Commission meeting in Kalamazoo.



Chair Portia Roberson swore in Regina Gasco for a second term.

Annie Urasky to Serve as MDCR's Legislative Liaison

Annie Urasky, who had led the MDCR Division on Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing (DODDBHH) since her hiring in March of 2015, became MDCR's Legislative Liaison at the end of FY2024.

The Legislative Liaison researches and advises on key bills introduced in the Michigan House and Senate that could potentially impact civil rights in Michigan. Working with MDCR's Executive Team, the Legislative Liaison coordinates and communicates the Department's position on legislation, represents MDCR at House and Senate committee hearings, develops bill analyses and tracks legislation, and engages other state departments and agencies.

"I am honored to continue working with MDCR in a new capacity," said Urasky. "I am excited to coordinate, research and advise on legislation which could have repercussions on the civil rights of the people of this state, and the important efforts which drive the MDCR mission."

Annie graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in English from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.



In 2022, Annie Urasky, then Director of MDCR's Division on Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing, testifying before the Michigan legislature in support of HB 5777, the language acquisition bill that requires the state to develop resources to help parents or legal guardians of children who are deaf or hard of hearing to monitor and track their child's language acquisition.

MDCR Files Charge of Discrimination Against Traverse City Salon

The Backstory:

For more than 30 years, the Michigan Civil Rights Commission has publicly called for adding protection for Michigan's LGBTQ+ residents to the state's signature civil rights law, the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act (ELCRA). In 2017, years before the legislature voted to do so, the Commission issued a landmark interpretive statement declaring that protection on the basis of sex in ELCRA included sexual orientation and gender identity. That move allowed MDCR to begin investigating complaints under this inclusive interpretation of the word "sex".

The Charge:

Early in FY2024, MDCR filed a formal charge against the Studio 8 Hair Lab LLC, a Traverse City salon, after investigating several complaints of discrimination filed against them.

MDCR asserted that statements published by Studio 8 on social media and elsewhere denying services to individuals based on sex was a violation of [ELCRA](#). Find [the full text of the charge against Studio 8 here](#).

"This is not a complicated case," said MDCR Executive Director John E. Johnson, Jr. "It is not a case that relies on complex legal concepts or requires expansive or convoluted arguments to explain. But none of that is to say it is not an important case. It is."

"The truth is that Studio 8, through its owner, openly and repeatedly violated the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act by stating in published comments that they would deny services to individuals based on sex – specifically in this case, gender identity."

Under ELCRA, it is a violation to print, post, or publish a statement or notice which indicates that the full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services and facilities of a public accommodation will be refused an individual because of sex, including sexual orientation, gender identity and expression.

Since Studio 8 refused to take part in conciliation to resolve the complaint, MDCR filed a formal charge of discrimination. Following a hearing, an Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) found that discrimination had occurred and submitted a recommendation to the Michigan Civil Rights Commission on the appropriate penalty. The Commission will review the recommendation, decide whether they agree with the ALJ's findings, and could potentially order corrective action. The Commission is expected to address the charge in April of 2025. If either party to the complaint disagrees with the Commission's final order, they may appeal the decision to the circuit court.

Access a recording of the November 15, 2023, [press conference announcing the charge against Studio 8 here](#).



Studio 8 Hair Lab in Traverse City. Photo by Lily Guiney, courtesy of Michigan Advance.



Public Hearings and Summit Produce Proposals to Help **Eliminate Housing Discrimination in Michigan**

Since 2022, MDCR has held an annual Civil Rights Summit, bringing together public policy, non-profit, business and elected leaders to grapple with a specific civil rights issue facing the state. The 2024 Summit focused on fair housing, and specifically looked at ways to reduce and eliminate housing discrimination in Michigan.

Leading up to the Summit, the Commission and Department held a series of public hearings to take testimony from people who have faced discrimination in buying, selling, renting or financing a home. The Commission also wanted to hear from individuals with disabilities who have been denied housing or reasonable accommodations.

Along with a virtual statewide hearing, the Commission and Department held in-person listening sessions in Detroit, Flint and Grand Rapids. The hearings culminated in the day-long Civil Rights Summit on Fair Housing held on June 12, 2024, in Detroit. The Summit brought together civil rights, fair housing, real estate, and banking policy experts and advocates to examine the root causes of, and potential remedies for, housing discrimination.

“Let me be clear: no single day of focus on a problem as complex and embedded in our culture as housing discrimination will cure this societal ill,” said MDCR Executive Director John E. Johnson, Jr. “But let it never be said that people of knowledge, determination and heart cannot come together to make change. We intend for this gathering of like minds to light the spark that leads to real and meaningful advances in the fight to eliminate housing discrimination.”

Gloria Lara, Chair of the Michigan Civil Rights Commission, welcomed participants to the Summit. She encouraged attendees to engage with Summit panelists and speakers.

“While you’ll spend time hearing from experts and experienced advocates, we wouldn’t need to hold a Summit if we only wanted to hear from them. We have built in space and time for your input – your questions, your experiences, your ideas. I encourage you to take advantage of those

opportunities to share your point of view, to ask the probing question, to offer counterpoint when you think it is valid and should be part of the discussion. You are the reason we're here."

Several Summit speakers acknowledged that while blatant discriminatory actions and speech have diminished, more subtle but equally damaging discrimination is still part of the housing landscape in Michigan.

Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer addressed housing discrimination historically, while raising the importance of fighting its modern-day manifestations and their impact.

"For most of our nation's history, explicit, open housing discrimination was perfectly legal," said Governor Whitmer. "Families of color were redlined out of communities and systematically denied loans, unable to buy their piece of the American dream. We heard testimony about more subtle, modern housing discrimination over the last few months during fair housing hearings across Michigan. We've made a lot of progress. But we still see the long shadow of housing discrimination. This kind of discrimination is not only morally repugnant, it is illegal. We must remain vigilant and fight it everywhere it rears its ugly head."

Lisa Rice, President of the National Fair Housing Alliance, delivered the opening keynote on the impact of artificial intelligence on housing discrimination.

"Technology is driving millions of acts of discrimination – the problem is we just can't see it," said Rice.

She outlined recent high-profile cases of Dr. Raven Baxter and actor Wendell Pierce who both faced discrimination in the attempt to buy and rent a home.

"No one knew what to do, where to go for help," said Rice. "If the public doesn't know what to do when they face blatant forms of discrimination, how informed do you think the general public is about algorithmic bias?"

The afternoon keynote speaker -- Colette Massengale, Senior Policy Representative at the National Association of Realtors -- spoke to the role the real estate industry can play in helping reform and educate on the legal landscape of fair housing.

At the close of the Summit, MDCR Executive Director Johnson repeated his commitment to come out of this months-long process with specific policy recommendations designed to drive progress on eliminating housing discrimination.

In the summer following the gathering, MDCR circulated the post-Summit report, "[No Place Like MI Home](#)," that summarized the hours of hearing testimony and full-day Summit. Two overriding principles were apparent: first, addressing housing discrimination is critical for Michigan residents to survive and thrive; and second, fair housing can only be secured through a combination of cooperative enforcement and proactive education.



Specific policy recommendations that came out of the public hearings and Civil Rights Summit:

Legislative Policy Recommendations

- Support legislation to protect residents from housing discrimination around source of income, eviction record expungement, or criminal records.
- Remove the exemption excluding properties with five or less units since most properties in Michigan are smaller.
- Support legislation making it illegal to discriminate against buyers using FHA loans.
- Educate legislators and regulators about technology-based discrimination to dispel myths and clarify issues.

Administrative Policy Recommendations

- Create a task force with financial companies, data analysts and fair housing groups to create some guiding principles for future uses of AI.
- Increase money for testing and create a pool of testers that can be shared with fair housing centers around the state.
- Create a statewide fair housing and accessibility education and resources initiative targeting tenants, property owners, and staff.
- Create training and resources for CDBG recipients, developers, and local zoning entities regarding exclusionary zoning and accessibility.
- Establish disparate impact investigations around credit ratings and mortgage denial rates.

At the close of the Summit, Director Johnson pledged to establish a task force to tackle housing discrimination and work toward realizing the key principles that came out of the Summit.



Team MDCR Leads in Advancing Fair Housing

MDCR is actively engaged in advancing fair housing in Michigan, training and presenting to both industry groups and community partners to help ensure fair housing for all.

Housing Unit Manager, Gwen Moffitt, shares their impactful efforts to bring an end to housing discrimination in Michigan.

“Fair Housing presentations and trainings are integral to the life of Housing Civil Rights Teams at MDCR,” explained Gwen. “We facilitate presentations to landlords, homeowner associations (HOAs), real estate agents, property management companies, housing industry conferences and the public at large.”

“The ongoing list of targeted audiences includes the Housing Unit’s most recent presentation for the Battle Creek NAACP on Tuesday, September 24, 2024. Kudos to our presenters, Investigators Kathy Smith and Tanika Okoiruele who joined me in facilitating a 1.5-hour presentation and an additional 30 minutes fielding questions from the participants.”

“Lynn Ward Gray, President of the Battle Creek NAACP, moderated the Q&A session, and graciously thanked staff

for traveling to Battle Creek to conduct the in-person presentation. Evaluation comments from the 53 attendees were very positive and indicated that the presentation was well received, especially the multiple investigation case examples provided. Comments on the returned evaluations rated the overall presentation as “Very Good to Excellent” and consistently attendees noted that it “increased [their] knowledge of Fair Housing Laws.” Our “Educate” and “Engage” missions were once again accomplished in serving a Michigan community!”



Pictured above, left to right: Battle Creek NAACP President, Lynn Ward Gray; Manager Gwen Moffitt; and Investigators Kathy Smith and Tanika Okoiruele.



More Than 300 Attend 14th **MI Response to Hate Conference** in East Lansing

On Tuesday, Sept. 10, MDCR and the Michigan Alliance Against Hate Crimes (MIAAHC) held MI Response to Hate, a statewide conference on hate crimes, at the Kellogg Hotel and Conference Center in East Lansing.

The one-day conference in its 14th year is the largest gathering of its kind in Michigan. The event is always a draw for influential leaders in law enforcement, community building and government. The theme of this year's gathering was "In Allyship, We Rise: Together Against Hate" and featured experts who addressed topics including the history of race and policing, radicalization to violence, a legal overview of hate crimes, and extremism in gaming. Along with welcome remarks from MDCR Executive Director John E. Johnson, Jr. and MCRC Chair Gloria Lara, the conference opened with presentations on allyship and the state of civil rights from Mark A. Totten, U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Michigan; Dawn N. Ison, U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Michigan; and Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel.





Concurrent workshops throughout the day featured a notable list of presenters, including:

Zack Stanton – Deputy Editor, POLITICO

Brett Mason – Special Agent, FBI

Ben Popp – Center on Extremism, Anti-Defamation League (ADL)

Peter Hammer – Director of the Damon J. Keith Center for Civil Rights, Wayne State University

Sarah Krebs – Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer, Michigan State Police

Antonio Richardson – Detective Sgt., Cyber Section, Michigan State Police

Sunita Doddamani – Assistant United States Attorney, Civil Rights Unit, U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Michigan

Nils Kessler – Assistant United States Attorney, National Security Section, U.S. Attorney's Office for the Western District of Michigan

LaDonna Logan – Assistant Attorney General, Head of Hate Crimes and Domestic Terrorism Unit, Michigan Department of Attorney General

Jocelyn Howard – Executive Director, Citadel of Perpetual Learning, LLC



The packed agenda featured expert speakers exploring a range of topics related to hate and bias.

- Sarah Krebs and Antonio Richardson from the Michigan State Police led a session on the history of race and policing.
- FBI Special Agent Brent Mason addressed individuals becoming radicalized to violence.
- Sunita Doddamani, LaDonna Logan and Nils Kessler provided a legal overview of hate crimes and hate incidents.
- Ben Popp with the ADL's Center on Extremism examined extremism in gaming.

The lunch plenary session featured an example of allyship displayed. Entitled, "Michigan's Historic Battle for Housing Integration," a compelling panel of allies discussed the story of integrating Warren, Michigan in the 1960's, with first-hand accounts from Carl and Marian Muma, who acted as straw buyers of a house in Warren for interracial couple Carado and Ruby Bailey. The act became what POLITICO Deputy Editor Zach Stanton called "...a flashpoint in the national battle over integration." Anthony Lewis, MDCR's Director of Community Engagement and Education, moderated the discussion which featured:

- Peter Hammer, Director of the Damon J. Keith Center for Civil Rights, Wayne State University.
- Zach Stanton, POLITICO Deputy Editor.
- Jocelyn Howard, Executive Director, Citadel of Perpetual Learning, LLC.
- Straw buyers of the Bailey home in 1967, Carl and Marion Muma.



Voting Rights Take Center Stage in FY2024

At their May 23, 2022 meeting, the Michigan Civil Rights Commission passed a [resolution calling on the Department of Civil Rights \(MDCR\) to establish a Voting Rights Initiative \(VRI\)](#) aimed at reaching people at risk of discrimination at the polls, and educating them and others about their right to vote.

MDCR took up the challenge and built a VRI team responsible for drafting messages and scripts, designing handouts, and delivering / distributing VRI materials throughout the state. The messages conveyed would apply to everyone, but were also designed to target specific communities, including people with disabilities, those who speak a language other than English, the housing insecure, students and returning citizens. Leading with the tagline, “Voting is a civil right,” every VRI flyer, pin, palm card, pull-up banner, radio ad and billboard included that phrase and an invitation to visit Michigan.gov/VOTE – a comprehensive, Michigan Department of State website with questions and answers about all things voting.



The VRI team was coordinated by consultant Kamilia Landrum and MDCR’s Director of Engagement and Education, Anthony Lewis, with MDCR’s Communications team playing a significant role in developing specific strategies and deliverables to reach people throughout the state. The Communications team, made up of MDCR Communications Director, Vicki Levengood, Social Media Strategist, Annika Clemens, and Graphic Designer, Payton Shane, along with LaToya Henry from the Detroit Branch NAACP, developed concepts and drafted and designed communications toolkits, palm cards, signage, radio ads, direct mail pieces, and billboards.

Significant VRI Achievements in FY2024

Mobilizing Youth:

CEED Director Anthony Lewis has long led MDCR’s efforts to engage Michigan youth in the civil rights issues of our time, and voting rights was no exception. Through the MDCR-facilitated Civil Rights Youth Academy, Lewis, Director Johnson and others who help in the youth effort mobilized get-out-the-vote campaigns in schools that Academy participants attend, including the University of Michigan, Wayne State University and Western Michigan University. Younger participants conducted similar GOTV efforts in their high schools.

The VRI team also assembled and mailed packages of voting rights handouts, palm cards, pins, stickers and other voting rights materials to student associations at most Michigan universities, colleges and community colleges.

Extending Our Reach: **Social media:**

Throughout FY2024, MDCR developed, drafted, designed and funded five social

media campaigns on voting rights, targeting Michigan residents between 18 and 65, with some messaging aimed at reaching the disability community, people who speak a language other than English, and returning citizens. Along with strategic messages and compelling graphic design, the VRI team developed for social media several short-form videos on voting rights featuring MDCR Executive Director, John Johnson; Commission Chair, Gloria Lara; Director of the Division on Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing, Annie Urasky; and Kamilia Landrum, who along with her consulting role in the VRI effort serves as the Executive Director of the Detroit Branch NAACP. The videos covered the topics of accessible voting, early voting, making a voting plan, student voting and reporting incidents of harassment, intimidation, and discrimination at the polls. The five VRI social media campaigns in FY2024 achieved a combined reach of 2.5 million.

Ally Engagement:

The VRI Communications team drafted and designed two Communications / Social Media Toolkits – one ahead of the August primary and a second geared toward the November general election. The toolkits contained sample social media messages, e-blast copy and graphics that allowed recipients to easily cut-and-paste or customize messages to share with their own followers. The VRI team distributed the toolkits to more than 200 community partner organizations throughout Michigan.

Direct Voter Education:

•**Talking and tabling:** Ahead of the November general election, the VRI team held more than 20 voter education events where they shared voting rights messages and materials, including speaking before the Advisory Council to the MDCR Division on Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of

Hearing. They also stocked and staffed a voting rights table at MDCR's premiere annual event, the Civil Rights Summit.



•**A home on the web:** The VRI team, with the help of MDCR's Director of Strategic Initiatives and Public Information, Harold Core, created a permanent webpage on the MDCR site that features information on the Voting Rights Initiative, voter registration and voter education. The page is also home to the Voting Rights Initiative communications / social media toolkit.



•**On the airwaves:** The VRI team scripted and scheduled 30-second radio ads which aired in Wayne, Oakland, Macomb and Washtenaw Counties; portions of Monroe, Genesee, Lapeer, St. Clair, and Sanilac

Counties; the Grand Rapids metro area and portions of west Michigan. The ads featured MDCR Director John Johnson, Commission Chair Gloria Lara, Commission Secretary Luke Londo, Detroit NAACP's Kamilia Landrum, and members of the MDCR-facilitated Civil Rights Youth Academy. A total of 236 radio spots aired in the weeks prior to the November general election.

•**Direct to the original inbox:** Along with translating most VRI materials into Spanish and Arabic, the VRI communications team wrote and designed a voter education mailer targeted to reach 68,000 Spanish or Arabic-speaking households and businesses in the Detroit metro area. Each mailer contained information on voting rights in English on one side and either Spanish or Arabic on the other, along with a QR code that linked to the Michigan Voter Information Center, Michigan.gov/VOTE.

•**Along a highway near you:** Beginning in late September, the VRI team-drafted-and-designed messages educating people about their voting rights began appearing on billboards across the state. The messages varied depending on location, with some targeting nearby student populations, and others aiming to reach people who speak Spanish or Arabic, with copy in those languages. In total, 21 billboards along highways from Detroit to Marquette and beyond reached a broad cross section of Michigan residents with punchy, direct messages, such as “Voting is a civil right – and all your rights are riding on it.” Every billboard directed people to the Michigan Voter Information Center to learn more about their right to vote.

•**On the opinion page:** MDCR Executive Director John E. Johnson Jr. published an [op-ed in the Detroit Free Press](#) on the importance of removing barriers to voting, and ensuring that people with disabilities, returning citizens, and those who do not speak or read English have full access to the polls and to the ballot.



ALPACT

Advocates and Leaders for Police and Community Trust, or ALPACT, has one overarching mission: to build bonds of trust and accountability between law enforcement and the communities they serve. From its inception 25 years ago when the first chapter was established in Detroit, MDCR has been not only an active member, but thanks to MDCR's Community Engagement Division, the department has led the effort to expand ALPACT into new communities and facilitate ALPACT activities and programming.

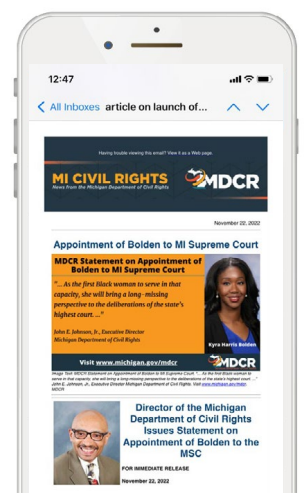
ALPACT currently has active chapters in the following communities and regions:

- Detroit (est. 1995)
- Berrien County and Flint (est. 2010)
- Kent County (est. 2012)
- Saginaw (est. 2013)
- Lansing and Jackson (est. 2015)
- Traverse City (est. 2016)
- Battle Creek (est. 2017)
- Kalamazoo County (est. 2020)



Subscribe to the **MI Civil Rights Newsletter**

Subscribe to MDCR's monthly newsletter, MI Civil Rights, to stay on top of the latest civil rights news and relevant happenings in the Michigan legislature.



MDCR 2024 Highlights

By Division

Enforcement Division for the Win: Seasoned Hands and New Hires Cut Down Case Backlog

In the first half of this decade, years of underfunding, ever-increasing caseloads, and a pandemic-induced hiring freeze left MDCR with insufficient personnel and resources to close old complaints and stay ahead of the steady stream of new ones. At a particular low point, MDCR employed only 29 investigators. The result: a backlog of older cases that overtook the agency's capacity to close them.

Shortly after he took the helm in 2021, MDCR Executive Director John E. Johnson, Jr. requested an audit of the agency's enforcement policies and processes in an effort to get a clear-eyed look at the problem and map the road to its resolution. That candid and necessary action, coupled with legislators' and Governor Whitmer's realization of the urgent need for additional funding, allowed MDCR to begin to wind down the daunting backlog of complaints at an astounding rate – all while managing a fast-track hiring process and the never-ending flow of new complaints coming in daily.

The work to whittle down the backlog began in FY2023, and Enforcement, which that year began building up their staffing levels, made inroads in closing out complaints. But the Division still faced a daunting number of so-called 'aged' cases at the beginning of FY2024.

One prospect by one, HR and Enforcement Division leadership tackled the tedious and time-consuming process of recruiting, reviewing, interviewing and hiring intake staff, investigators, and attorneys – the people who would help drive down the



backlog and keep up with heavy caseloads. And they did all that while staying on top of their normal daily workload.

The result: In FY2024, MDCR brought on approximately 87 new staff, 68 of which – or a full 78% of the total -- were investigators, intake personnel, lawyers and administrative personnel serving in the Enforcement Division. While newly hired Enforcement staff require weeks of training and months of lower caseloads as they acquire the skills necessary to efficiently tackle complex civil rights investigations, the combined new and seasoned staff were able to reduce the backlog from a total of 1,327 complaints at the beginning of the fiscal year to 573 at its end. In total, the Enforcement Division closed 2,080 complaints of discrimination in FY2024 and secured more than \$1.8M in awards and settlements for claimants.

"The Enforcement team worked very hard at closing aged cases and meeting the goals we had set for them," said Marlene Cain, Director of Investigations. "Managers, deputies and the legal team provided Enforcement staff with ongoing support and guidance to help them complete their investigations. It was an all-hands-on-deck situation for Enforcement, and everyone pitched in to complete the investigations."

Community Engagement and Education Division (CEED)

As the name reflects, CEED includes the separate Divisions on Community Engagement and Education, led by Director Anthony Lewis, with Charles Schoder and Danita Wimbush leading Community Engagement and Education respectively. Both divisions focus on strategies to fulfill our mission to help prevent discrimination and bias.

Education Division Highlights

In FY 2024, the Education Division team:

- Finalized procedures for agency-wide orientation/onboarding; oversaw onboarding of 55 employees and contractors.
- Coordinated dozens of internal MDCR trainings on topics such as Cultural Competency Training for Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing Communities and Introduction to Neurodiversity.
- Conducted 10 external trainings on topics including Civil Rights 101, Service Animals, Building Cultural Competence and Sexual Harassment.
- Coordinated MDCR's internship/externship program.



Community Engagement Division Highlights

In FY2024, the Community Engagement team:

- Opened the Mission Forward Grant for Advocates and Leaders for Police and Community Trust (ALPACT). CEED approved six grants for projects totaling approximately \$186,000 aimed at enhancing relations between law enforcement and the communities they serve. Examples:
 - The Connect, Protect and Serve Lunch with Saginaw County Community Mental Health Authority and Saginaw Police Department brought together community members with mental illnesses and local law enforcement.
 - The Community-Based Approach to Transforming Community proposal included community discussions and capacity building on behalf of the Flint ALPACT.
- Presented MI Response to Hate (MIR2H) webinars to a combined audience of 700 on topics including Voting and Violence, Understanding Disability Discrimination, the Replacement Myth, LGBTQ+ Pride and the Civil Rights Act of 1964.
- Hosted the annual MIR2H Conference with the theme, "In Allyship We Rise: Together Against Hate". Three hundred and fifty participants attended sessions on:
 - The History of Race and Policing
 - Radicalization to Violence Pathway
 - Legal Overview of Hate Crimes and Hate Incidents
 - Extremism in Gaming
 - Michigan's Historic Battle for Housing Integration

Disability Rights and Compliance Division

The Disability Rights and Compliance Division (DRACD) is home to the ADA Compliance Unit; the Division on Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing (DODDBHH); the Voluntary Service Animal Registry; and the Contract Compliance and FOIA offices. Led by Director Tyra Khan, the division provides training to help public and private agencies comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and raise awareness and cultural competency around disability.

ADA Compliance Unit

In FY 2024, led by Manager Tiara Yakini, the ADA Compliance Unit:

- Processed 125 ADA Title II grievances and 190 service animal identification applications.
- Conducted 48 public trainings on topics such as Disability Civil Rights Laws, Service Animals Basics, and Workplace Accommodations.
- Held several internal trainings, including sessions with State of Michigan departments on Title II of the ADA.
- Hosted public forums on disability rights, including Celebrating Black Persons with Disabilities, Embracing Neurodivergence, and Literary Accessibility.
- Hosted its first-ever ADA Anniversary Virtual Commemoration with 400 participants.



MDCR staff completed the Great Lakes ADA Center Trainer Leadership Network 2-day session.

Division on Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing

In FY 2024, DODDBHH Division Director Annie Urasky partnered with Attorney General Dana Nessel to conduct senior scam events for the deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing (DDBHH) in six communities, alerting DDBHH seniors to these scams and how to protect themselves.



Also in FY 2024, DODDBHH:

- Led “Know Your Rights” training sessions with regional DDBHH organizations.
- Conducted cultural competency training on issues including agency and access needs and effective communication in medical settings.
- Partnered with MDCR’s DEI Division to create a video on cultural competency for the Michigan State Police.

FOIA and Contract Compliance

Last fiscal year, MDCR’s FOIA office, led by Director Kammy Frayer, realized significant increases in efficiency in responding to FOIA requests, fulfilling them in an average of under five days and increasing efficiency by up to 65 percent. The changes instituted last fiscal year continue to cut the time required to process FOIA requests, even as demand continues to rise.

In FY 2025, DRACD will re-start MDCR Contract Compliance services, with planning beginning in FY 2024.

Division on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI)

MDCR's Division on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI Division), led by Alfredo Hernandez Corsen, develops and provides education, training and resources designed to increase cultural competency, and collaborates with organizations, businesses, and government agencies to operationalize DEI principles and practices.

In FY2024, the DEI Division:

- Conducted DEI workshops with several state and local agencies, economic development organizations and others including the Michigan State Lottery and the Prism Project.
- Led presentations outlining key DEI principles for organizations like the Michigan Municipal League, the University of Michigan, and at least four departments of state government.
- Developed and provided a cultural competency training video for the Michigan State Police.
- Established a training program on strengthening DEI leadership.
- Facilitated dozens of Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) coaching sessions with State of Michigan Office of the Child Advocate and the Washtenaw Shelter Association.
- Developed Intercultural Development Plan (IDP) support modules and curricula for expanded Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) programming and coaching.

The DEI Division also reached MDCR-only and State of Michigan employees with DEI training and programming. The DEI team facilitated Bridge Talk virtual events for state employees on topics including resistance to DEI work and strategies to mitigate the resistance, as well as storytelling as a means of furthering DEI principles.

The DEI Division was also responsible for two significant projects:

- Developing MDCR's Language Access Plan to guide MDCR in reaching the goal of providing Limited English Proficient (LEP) individuals meaningful access to department programs and services, and
- Overseeing the Native American Boarding School Study Project, with a final report of findings expected in January of 2025.



Finance and Management Services Division

Effectively Managing MDCR's Bigger Better Budget

The Finance and Management Services (F&MS) Division, led by Division Director Abdel Aly, is responsible for providing timely, effective and efficient financial, procurement, budget, IT, and office support services to MDCR staff, other state departments and our customers to enable them to provide quality services. Whether it's processing invoices, managing the department's SharePoint site, deploying laptops and cell phones, or navigating complex budget and resource challenges, MDCR could not function without the expertise the F&MS Division provides.

Budget Highlights:

- In FY22, F&MS worked on saving all MDCR unspent funds (\$500K) as work projects to be used in the coming four years.
- In FY23, F&MS worked on spending all on-going operation General Funds (GF) and secured approval for a GF increase of 58% in FY24, from \$15M to \$23.8M. F&MS also helped MDCR secure one-time project funds of \$5M and \$1M for IT.
- In FY24, F&MS is projecting to save the unspent \$3.7M as work projects to be used in the coming four years.

On February 28 and March 19, 2024, members of MDCR's Leadership team, led by Executive Director John E. Johnson, Jr., testified before legislative appropriations subcommittees in regard to the Governor's FY 2024-25 budget recommendation for MDCR. The team also provided an overview of department operations.

[View MDCR's presentation](#) before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on General Government beginning at approximately the 1:26:29 mark.



Strategic Initiatives and Public Information Division

The Division on Strategic Initiatives and Public Information (SIPI), led by Director Harold Core, includes Fund Development Coordinator Liliana Stoneback and Strategic Initiatives Coordinator Patricia Barrera. It is also home to the Communications team, led by Director Vicki Levengood, with Digital Strategist Annika Clemens and Graphic Designer Payton Shane. The SIPI team is responsible for major event planning and execution, fundraising, strategic communications, media relations, social media, graphic design, and writing and publishing an internal and [external newsletter](#).

Highlights, Strategic Initiatives

Along with their other duties, the Strategic Initiatives team of Harold Core, Patricia Barrera and Liliana Stoneback spent 9 months planning, organizing and implementing the 2024 Civil Rights Summit on Fair Housing, including:

- Executing a series of public hearings on housing discrimination ahead of the Summit.
- Planning and facilitating, with input from the hearings, the statewide Civil Rights Summit on Fair Housing.
- Researching and recruiting experts on fair housing to take part in the Summit.
- Raising the necessary funding to execute a statewide conference.
- [*Preparing a Summit Summary, No Place Like MI Home*](#), written by Harold Core, that captured Summit findings and policy recommendations which was distributed to state policy makers.

Highlights, Communications

In FY2024, concurrent with their ongoing duties, the SIPI Communications team was

responsible for producing marketing and communications deliverables for the Voting Rights Initiative (VRI) designed to educate people on their right to vote. The VRI was born out of a 2022 Commission [resolution](#) declaring, “Voting is a civil right.”

Communications:

- Created two VRI social media toolkits and distributed them to partner organizations.
- Wrote, designed, and placed voting rights billboards in key locations statewide.
- Scripted and shot short-form videos with leaders delivering the “Voting is a civil right” message which were shared widely on social media.
- Wrote, designed and printed marketing collateral including a palm card, voting check list, a direct mail piece to reach Spanish and Arabic speaking communities, and more.
- Drafted a voting rights [op-ed by MDCR](#) Director Johnson that ran in the Detroit Free Press.



Executive Team



John E. Johnson, Jr. is the Executive Director of the Michigan Department of Civil Rights (MDCR) and a member of the cabinet of Governor Gretchen Whitmer. The Michigan Civil Rights Commission named Johnson permanent Executive Director of MDCR on July 26, 2021. At MDCR, Johnson oversees an annual budget of more than \$30 million and offices in Detroit, Grand Rapids, Flint, Lansing and Marquette.

Before his appointment, Johnson served as MDCR's Legislative Liaison and Advisor to the Commission. Prior to his service with MDCR, Johnson was the Executive Director of the Michigan

Legislative Black Caucus, a position he held for seven years. Over the course of his career, Johnson has served in a number of leadership positions, including Corporation Counsel for the City of Detroit, General Counsel to the Detroit NAACP, Deputy Executive Director of the Legal Aid and Defender Association, and Hearing Officer for the Michigan Tax Tribunal. He was also a Management Consultant with Legal Services Corporation of Washington D.C., the single largest funder of civil legal aid for low-income Americans in the nation. Johnson also owned a private law practice.

Johnson has a Bachelor of Arts from Howard University and a Juris Doctorate from Valparaiso University. He has been a member of the State Bar of Michigan for more than 41 years and has been involved with the Detroit NAACP since 1992.



Kimberly Woolridge has held the position of Deputy Executive Director of MDCR since August of 2021. She began her 23-year career with the Michigan Civil Rights Commission and MDCR in 1999, serving as Assistant Commission Counsel, Staff Attorney and ADA Title II Appeals Coordinator. Concurrently, from 2002 to 2006, she served as Special Assistant Attorney General, litigating cases on behalf of MDCR in state circuit courts. In 2018, Woolridge was named the State ADA Coordinator and ADA Compliance Director. As head of ADA Compliance for the state, Woolridge provided counsel to the Governor, MDCR Executive Director and executive branch

departments on state and federal disability laws; advised state offices on complying with disability statutes; and oversaw the training of ADA Coordinators in state government. In March of 2021, she added oversight of MDCR's Statewide Training Division to her duties. In August of 2021, Director Johnson named Woolridge Deputy Executive Director. In that position, she oversees the Disability Rights and Compliance Division; the ADA Compliance Office; the Community Engagement and Education Division; the Enforcement Division; the office of Professional Standards; and the Division on Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing. Prior to joining MDCR, Woolridge was a staff attorney at the Misdemeanor Defender's Office for Indigents, Inc. in Detroit, and in 1997, established her own private law practice. Woolridge earned her Juris Doctorate degree from the Michigan State University College of Law and a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, Marketing and Advertising from Wayne State University.



Abdel Aly

Abdel Aly joined MDCR in March of 2022 as the Division Director of Finance and Management Services. In this position, he oversees all financial and budget matters and payroll. Prior to joining MDCR, Aly served the State of Michigan for 24 years in a number of departments, including the Departments of Energy, Labor and Economic Growth; Licensing and Regulatory Affairs; Technology, Management and Budget; Health and Human Services; and the Michigan Economic Development Corporation. His experience is mainly in accounting, cost allocation and budget, as well as SIGMA, the state's vendor self-service system. Aly is also an Adjunct Professor at Northwood University. He is a Certified Public Accountant (CPA), with a bachelor's degree in accounting and master's degrees in auditing and taxation, and in accounting.



Patty Barrera

Patty Barrera has served the State of Michigan for more than 20 years in a variety of roles. Currently she serves as Strategic Initiatives Coordinator in the Strategic Initiatives and Public Information Division (SIPI). In this position, Patty assists with planning, coordinating and facilitating MDCR events and other projects assigned to the SIPI team. Previously she held a similar role within the Community Engagement Division, as well as assisting the Deputy Executive Director in ensuring projects are effectively and efficiently completed.

Patty began her career in 1994 with the Family Independence Agency as an Eligibility Specialist serving the migrant population. In 2001, Patty accepted a position in MDCR's Enforcement Division as a Civil Rights Investigator. She was later promoted to Civil Rights Manager, and subsequently Division Director. In these roles, she enforced civil rights laws, provided outreach and education services, and oversaw investigators.

Patty earned a Bachelor of Arts with a concentration in Criminal Justice from the University of Toledo in 2000 and a Master of Public Administration from Grand Valley State University in 2011.



Marlene Cain

Director of Investigations Marlene Cain has been employed by the State of Michigan for over 32 years. She has been with MDCR since 1997 and has held many positions during this time, including a Civil Rights Investigator. Marlene was the Civil Rights Manager for the Housing Unit since 2006. In August 2021, Cain became the Interim Director of Civil Rights Operations. Marlene has an MBA in Strategic Management from the Detroit College of Business and a BSN/RN from Davenport University.



Mark C. Bishop

Mark C. Bishop is Director of Management Services in the Finance and Management Services Division and supports/oversees the internal IT systems functions of MDCR as the Agency Security Officer (ASO), Software Asset Manager, and Agency Asset Manager. Mark also serves as the Agency Safety Coordinator and works with the Michigan State Police Emergency Management and Homeland Security Division (EMHSD) representing MDCR as its Emergency Management Coordinator (EMC) during declared statewide emergencies. Mark has over 22 years of service with MDCR as an investigator and attorney liaison in the Enforcement Division, trainer/ community liaison in the MDCR Public Affairs/Community Engagement Divisions and service as a Crisis Response Team lead. A veteran of the U.S. Army and licensed attorney, Mark has a B.A. in political science from the University of Michigan in US/Soviet Strategic Relations and JD from the Thomas M. Cooley Law School with a dual degree in Administration Law and Constitutional Law and Civil Rights.



Alannah M. Buford-Kamerman

Alannah M. Buford-Kamerman is the Acting Director of the Office of Legal Affairs for the Michigan Department of Civil Rights. Alannah obtained her bachelor's degree in anthropology and political science from Bard College at Simons Rock in 2012. She then graduated magna cum laude from Michigan State University College of Law and passed the bar in 2016. Before becoming a civil servant, Alannah was a distinguished civil litigator in both state and federal courts earning a "Rising Star" recognition from Michigan Super Lawyers in 2018. She joined the State of Michigan in April 2021 as a Staff Attorney at MDCR where she advised enforcement teams on cases as they progressed through investigation, conciliated resolutions between parties, and prosecuted cases in the administrative process on behalf of the department.



Annie Urasky

In September of 2024, Annie Urasky was named Legislative Liaison for MDCR. In this position, she is responsible for advising department leadership on bills introduced in the Michigan legislature that could impact the civil rights of Michigan residents. She also testifies on behalf of the department at legislative committee meetings and hearings. Previously, Annie was Director of MDCR's Division on Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing, serving in this capacity from 2015 until taking the position of Legislative Liaison. With more than ten years of experience in public administration, she is passionate about advocating for and elevating equitable practices which impact Michiganders. She currently serves as the Secretary of the National Association of State Agencies for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NASADHH) and was selected as a member of the 2020 leadership class of the Oakland County 39 Executive's Elite 40 under 40. Born Deaf, Annie graduated with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in English from the University of Illinois.



Harold Core

Harold Core serves as Director of Strategic Initiatives and Public Information for MDCR. In that capacity, he is responsible for managing the Communications, Strategic Initiatives, and Fund Development offices. He previously served as a Rights Representative, Public Information Officer, and Director of Public Affairs for MDCR. During his tenure with the department, Core was co-lead of the team that organized the 2006 Michigan Civil Rights Summit and completed several publications related to the 40th anniversary of the Commission and department. Prior to joining MDCR, Core had a long history of civil rights activism, including co-founding a Black studies group in his high school. In his personal life, Core has written and published two books, including an anthology of poems, essays, and short stories loosely focused on futurism. Core has a B.S in Economics from Lincoln University in Missouri, a M.A. in Political Science from Western Michigan University, and a Diversity Management Certificate from Cornell University. He has also completed professional certificates in General Civil & Private Practice Mediator Training and digital content strategy.



Kammy Frayre

Kammy Frayre serves as the Contract Compliance and FOIA Manager at MDCR. She started with MDCR at the end of January 2023 and has over 20 years of experience working for the State of Michigan. Kammy has a bachelor's degree in Public Policy and Administration and a Master's of Business Administration from MSU's Eli Broad Executive MBA program. Kammy came to MDCR with a background in FOIA and grant management for a variety of programs ranging from juvenile justice to public and intrastate transit to natural resources.



Alfredo Hernandez Corsen

DEI Division Director Alfredo Hernandez Corsen was born and raised in Panama. He moved to the United States in 1990 and joined the US Army at the age of 20. Corsen obtained a Bachelor's Degree in Liberal Studies with a minor in Philosophy from Grand Valley State University where his work, Language, Culture, Perception and Knowledge, was published in the McNair Scholar's Journal. He pursued graduate studies at Western Michigan University where he earned a master's degree in Comparative Religion and was a McNair Scholar and Thurgood Marshall Fellowship recipient. Corsen has worked in the field of equity for several years, developing inclusive strategies for organizational change. He has also taught college courses in the philosophy of religion and cultural anthropology.



Tyra Khan

Tyra Khan is the Director of the Disability Rights and Compliance Division. She has been with MDCR since 2002 and has worked as a Civil Rights Investigator, Staff Attorney, and ADA Coordinator. She has extensive experience in civil rights law with an emphasis on disability and fair housing law. Tyra is a certified ADA Coordinator under the University of Missouri College of Arts and Sciences and the Great Plains ADA Center. She has also completed many programs offered by the National Fair Housing Training Academy including Fair Housing Investigations and Litigating Fair Housing Cases. In her current role, she oversees the Division on Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing, FOIA, Contract Compliance, and the State of Michigan's ADA Coordinator duties. She has created various training modules for MDCR focusing on topics such as federal and state disability law, inclusive hiring practices, and service animals.



Stephanie Lenneman

Stephanie Lenneman is the Human Resources Director for the Michigan Department of Civil Rights and the Michigan Civil Service Commission. With over 15 years of HR experience in both the private and public sector, Stephanie has served the past ten years working for the State of Michigan in various HR roles. She holds a bachelor's degree in business and human resources management and has a Master of Business Administration in organizational leadership from the University of Findlay in Ohio.



Vicki Levengood

Since April of 2013, Vicki Levengood has served as Communications Director for MDCR, overseeing all internal and external communications, including the department's social media accounts and newsletters. She is the senior writer, spokesperson and media relations lead. Previously, Levengood served in the administration of Governor Jennifer Granholm as Communications Director and Director of Stakeholder Relations for the Governor's Economic Recovery Office, and has worked for various departments and divisions of state government since 2005. From 1997 to 2005, Levengood was the Michigan representative and federal legislative liaison for the National Environmental Trust and the Pew Charitable Trusts Environment Group. In 1993-1994, she served as press secretary on the gubernatorial campaign of former U.S. Rep. Howard Wolpe. Levengood earned a B.A. in English and Communications from Western Michigan University.



Anthony D. Lewis

Anthony Lewis is the Director of the Community Engagement and Education Division for MDCR, where he previously served as a Community Relations Specialist and as an investigator. He leads the department's community engagement programming and initiatives throughout the state. Lewis has built coalitions throughout the state between law enforcement and community leaders through his facilitation of the organization Advocates and Leaders for Police and Community Trust (ALPACT). He also oversees MDCR's youth initiatives, working with school districts on cultural awareness programming and policy development, and was instrumental in developing the Michigan Civil Rights Youth Academy. In addition, he has helped develop and present numerous presentations and programs on cultural competency and other civil rights topics. Lewis is a graduate of Florida A&M University with a Bachelor's Degree in Business Economics/Labor Relations.



Lamont David Satchel

Lamont David Satchel serves as General Counsel for MDCR and advisor to the Michigan Civil Rights Commission. In addition to private law practice, his professional background includes serving as Senior Attorney for the National Lawyers' Guild Law Center, Chief Legal Counsel to the City of Detroit Charter Revision Commission, and Director of Labor Relations and Employee Benefits for the City of Detroit. Satchel has held various leadership positions with the Detroit Public Schools and Detroit Public Schools Community District, including Senior Executive Director of Strategic Support and Labor Relations, Interim Superintendent of Academics and Interim Deputy Superintendent of Human Resources, as well as Interim Superintendent.



Marcelina Treviño

Attorney Marcelina Treviño serves as the Director of Enforcement for MDCR, which includes the Office of Legal Affairs. She started with the State of Michigan in 2009 at the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services as the Director of Migrant Affairs. In January 2011, she was hired by MDCR as the Reconsideration Attorney within the Law and Policy Division. In November of 2019, Treviño was promoted to the Director and Managing Attorney for the department's Office of Legal Affairs. In 2022, Trevino was named Director of Enforcement. Treviño has a BASW from Michigan State University, an MSW from the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor, and a JD from Thomas M. Cooley Law School.



Charles Schoder

Charles Schoder serves as the Director of Community Engagement for MDCR, leading a team of Civil Rights Specialists within the Community Engagement and Education Division (CEED). The Community Engagement Team's responsibilities include providing educational presentations and workshops on various topics, including general civil rights, sexual harassment, and cultural competence; building and maintaining relationships across Michigan to promote voluntary participation with civil rights laws; serving as liaisons or 'point persons' to various communities throughout the state; and convening MDCR's successful *MI Response to Hate* campaign (MIR2H) to bring awareness and help prevent hate crimes and bias incidents across Michigan. The MIR2H monthly campaign programming concludes with the annual MIR2H/MIAAHC conference in September.

Charles Schoder is honored to serve the public in his position at the Michigan Department of Civil Rights. Prior to his current role, he served as a Civil Rights Specialist and Investigator. Charles earned a bachelor's degree from Central Michigan University and a Master of Public Administration degree from the University of Michigan-Dearborn.



Liliana Stoneback

Liliana Stoneback started her career at MDCR in the 1990's working in the Executive Office, first as part of the Governor's Management Intern Program and then as an Assistant to MDCR Director Nanette Reynolds. As an immigrant from Colombia, Liliana had firsthand experience with bias and prejudice and during her time at MDCR became passionate about racial equity work. She left state government to raise her four kids but always tried to stay connected by working for various nonprofits as a consultant and grant writer, including for the Community Housing Network, Lighthouse of Michigan and MCAN. Liliana is a graduate of the Detroit Equity Action Lab, a racial equity fellowship through Wayne State University where she and her cohort focused on how they each can use their skills to dismantle systemic racism. Liliana is excited to return to MDCR as the Fund Development Coordinator. Liliana is also on the Advisory Council for the McNulty Institute for Women's Leadership at her alma mater, Villanova University. Liliana loves to spend time with her family.



Danita Wimbush

Danita L. Wimbush has been employed by the State of Michigan for more than ten years and is MDCR's Director of Education. In her current role, she is responsible for identifying personal and professional development opportunities for MDCR staff as well as bringing consistency and continuity to the MDCR brand through awareness, internal/external trainings, and community collaborations. Prior to joining MDCR, Wimbush was an automotive executive for more than twenty years. Her career began as an executive under Chrysler CEO Lee Iacocca. During her tenure, she was responsible for dealer development, training, marketing, and advertising. Her work at Chrysler led to a position with the American Honda Motor Company, where she served as an executive in dealer relations on the Honda and Acura accounts, and as a district manager and marketing manager responsible for all trainings for dealers in the Midwest prefecture and beyond. Danita is a graduate of Oakland University in Rochester.



Tiara Yakini

Tiara Yakini is Manager of the ADA Compliance Unit within the Disability Rights and Compliance Division at the Michigan Department of Civil Rights (MDCR). Tiara has been with MDCR since 2015 and has served in a variety of roles including work within the agency's Enforcement and Community Engagement & Education divisions. In addition to overseeing the state's Title II Grievance Procedure and the Voluntary Service Animal ID Program, this year Tiara initiated the launch of MDCR's Self-Evaluation & Transition Plan Initiative and formed an Accessibility Team charged with ensuring accessibility and inclusion of people with disabilities in all programs, services, activities, hiring, and recruitment. With a passion for public speaking, Tiara regularly develops and hosts public forums to educate the public on disability rights and compliance garnering the interest of hundreds of attendees each session. Tiara began her civil service career in 2009 at the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. Tiara has a Master of Business Administration degree from Davenport University. Her undergraduate studies were completed at the University of Michigan (Ann Arbor) where she obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology with a concentration in Social Inequality: Race, Class, and Gender.

MDCR Leadership Team

John. E. Johnson, Jr.
Executive Director

Shawn K. Sanford
Senior Executive Management
Assistant to the Director

Kimberly Woolridge
Deputy Executive Director

Sabrina Fomby
Senior Executive Management
Assistant to the Deputy Director

Abdel Aly
Director, Finance and Management
Services Division

Harold Core
Director, Strategic Initiatives and Public
Information Division

Alfredo Hernandez Corsen
Director, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
Division

Tyra Khan
Director, Disability Rights and
Compliance Division

Stephanie Lenneman
Human Resources Director

Anthony D. Lewis
Director, Community Engagement and
Education Division

Annie Urasky
Legislative Liaison

Lamont David Satchel
General Counsel

Marcelina Treviño
Director, Enforcement Division

The Michigan Civil Rights Commission was created by the Michigan Constitution to safeguard constitutional and legal guarantees against discrimination. The Commission is charged with investigating alleged discrimination against any person because of religion, race, color or national origin, sex, age, marital status, height, weight, arrest record, and physical and mental disability.



Individuals requiring this report in an alternative format should contact the Michigan Department of Civil Rights at **800-482-3604** or **MDCR-INFO@michigan.gov**