

# Low-Income Energy Policy Board

Kickoff Meeting  
April 29, 2022  
10:00 AM – Noon



Michigan Public Service Commission

# Agenda and Housekeeping

## Agenda

- Welcome
- Introductions
- Board Overview
- Committee Presentations
- Discussion
- Questions & Answers
- Next Steps

## Housekeeping

- Please mute yourself when not speaking
- Guests may note questions or comments in Q&A
- Board members may comment in the Board chat
- Save discussion and Q&A for the end of the meeting

Commissioner  
Tremaine Phillips

Why the convening  
& work of this  
Board is so  
important now?

Welcoming  
Remarks

# Commissioner Tremaine Phillips Introduction of Board Leaders

Anne Armstrong – MPSC  
Energy Affordability and  
Accessibility  
Collaborative

Brad Banks – MPSC  
Energy Waste Reduction  
Low-Income Workgroup

Andrew McNeally -  
UPPCO  
Energy Efficiency  
Program Administrator

# Roll Call: Introduction of Stakeholder Leaders

- Rick Bunch - 5 Lakes Energy; Michigan Municipal Association for Utility Issues
- Alexis Blizman - Ecology Center
- Briana DuBose- EcoWorks Detroit
- Martin Kushler – ACEEE (American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy)
- Patrick Leahy - SEMCO Energy Gas Company
- Kasey McNeally - Superior Watershed
- Standing in for Briana Parker of Elevate - Tim Skrotzki
- Wende Randall - Kent County Essential Needs Task Force

# Roll Call: Introduction of Members with Lived Experience

- Synia Gant-Jordan
- Member of the Disability Community

# Roll Call: Introduction of Policy Leaders

- Cory Connolly - Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy
- Rachael A. Eubanks – Department of Treasury
- Jeff Guilfoyle - Department of Treasury
- Joshua Rivera – Department of Health and Human Services – Economic Stability Administration
- Kelly Rose – Michigan State Housing Development Authority
- Ninah Sasy - Department of Health and Human Services - Social Determinants of Health Strategy
- Standing in for Derrell Slaughter is Sam Whillans – National Resource Defense Council; Governor’s Council on Climate Solutions

# Roll Call: Introduction of Staff Resource Experts

- Elaina Braunschweig - Analyst, Regulated Energy Division
- Jamie Curtis - Grant Administrator, Michigan Energy Assistance Program
- Christina Forist – Manager, Compliance & Investigation Section
- Reka Holley - Voelker – Manager, Communications Section
- Shatina Jones - Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer
- Amy Rittenhouse - Communications Specialist
- Jake Thelen - Departmental Specialist, Compliance & Investigation Section
- Mary Wilkins - Departmental Specialist, Customer Assistance Division



# Low-Income Energy Policy Board Overview



Michigan Public Service Commission



Why now?

- Collaborative efforts are taking place across our state and our nation.
- Michigan's Public Service Commissioners are prioritizing the values of safety, equity, and inclusion.
- Relationships are being built across sectors to address our systems holistically.

# What is our opportunity?

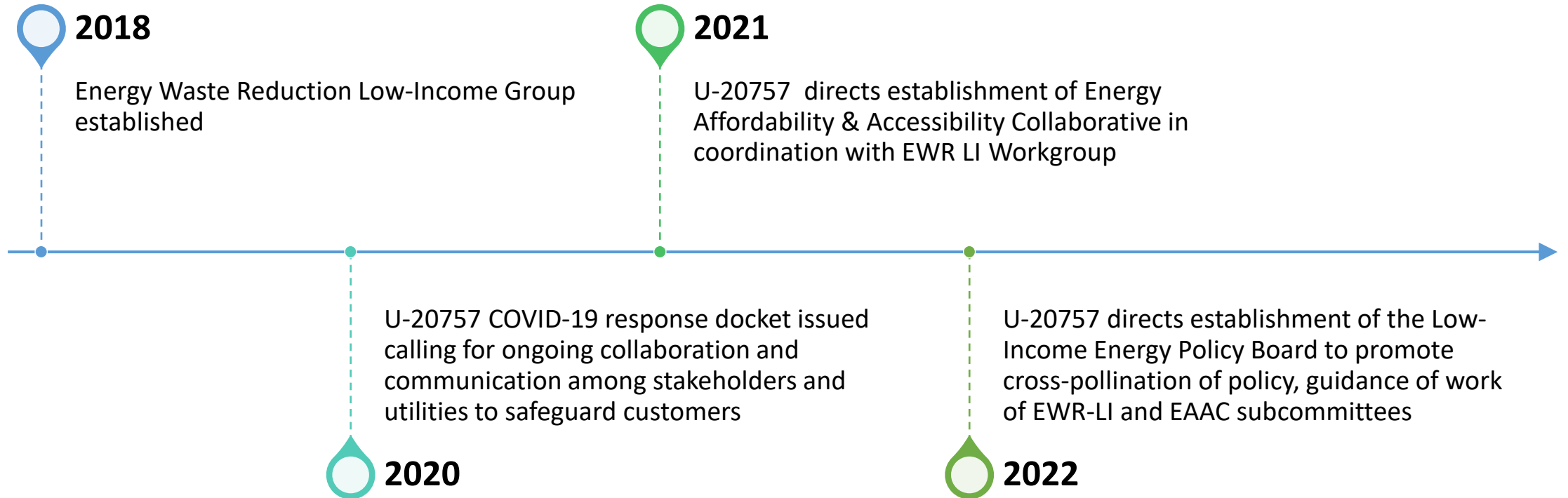
To look at how we keep people safe and connected

To promote equity and justice

To move from crisis to prevention

To create a system where the majority of households can sustainably pay their bills

# Low-Income Energy Policy Board Origins



# Original Charge: Energy Affordability & Accessibility Collaborative

- Recommend approaches for simplifying the energy assistance and customer protection systems, working with the EWR Low-Income workgroup
  - Simplify the energy assistance/EWR application & eligibility process
  - Next generation Affordable Payment Plans (APPs)
  - Structures for EWR and energy assistance linkages
- Explore a common definition of energy affordability and energy security with the goal of reducing the number of households in Michigan with unsustainable energy burdens
- Develop and recommend a long-term data collection strategy to inform program design and policy change
- Review rule-based protections
- Communication and engagement

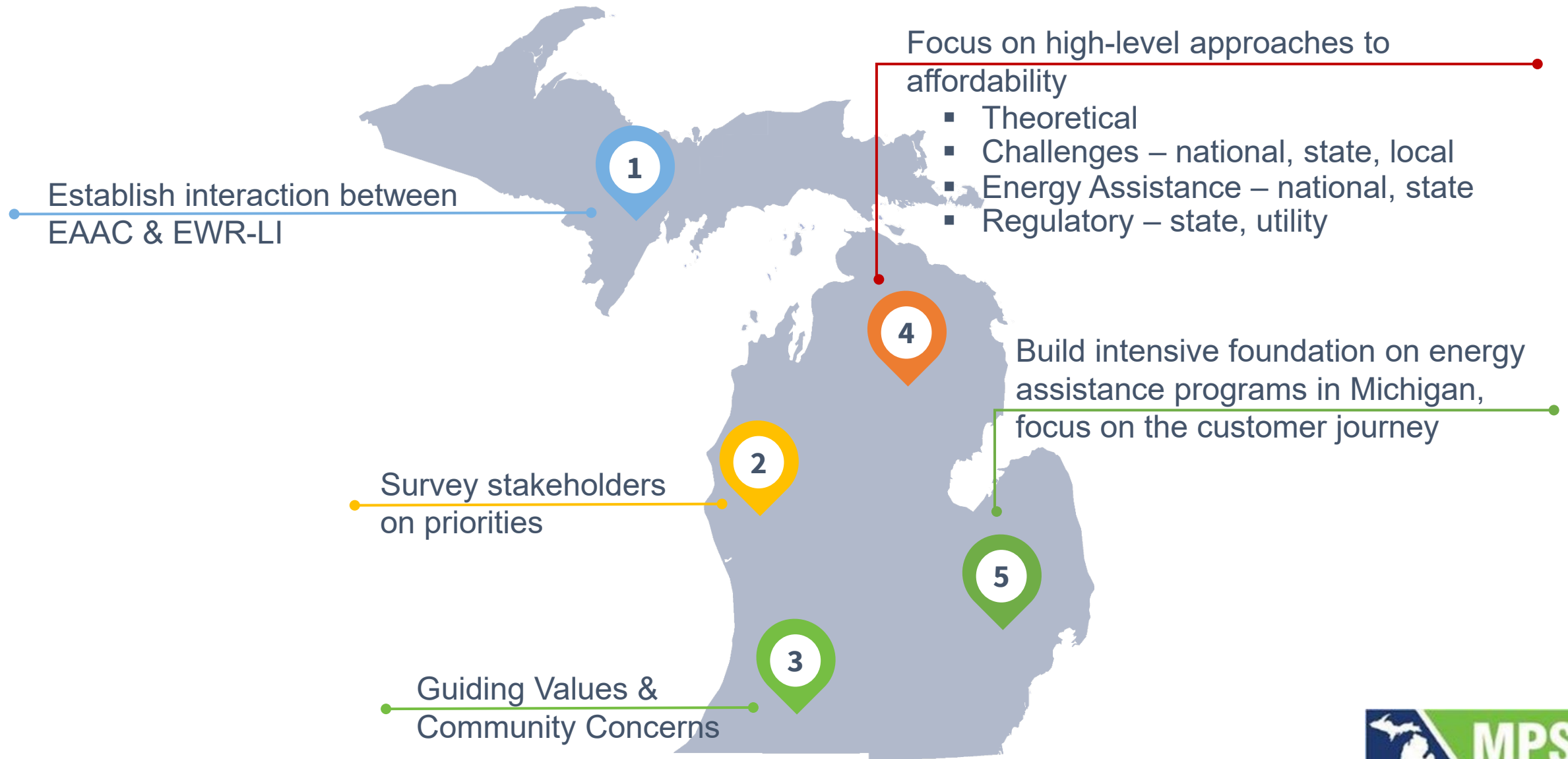
## COVID-19 Response

- Outreach and education
- Program and policy revision to meet immediate needs and reduce immediate barriers

## System Analysis and Recommendations for Long Term Reform

- Sustainable affordability
- Establish process for high energy burden/low-income communities to influence policy development
- Expand and increase ease of access to services
- Collection of data for protection, safety and equity

# Where We've Been



# U-20757 February 10 Recommendations/Charge

## General Direction

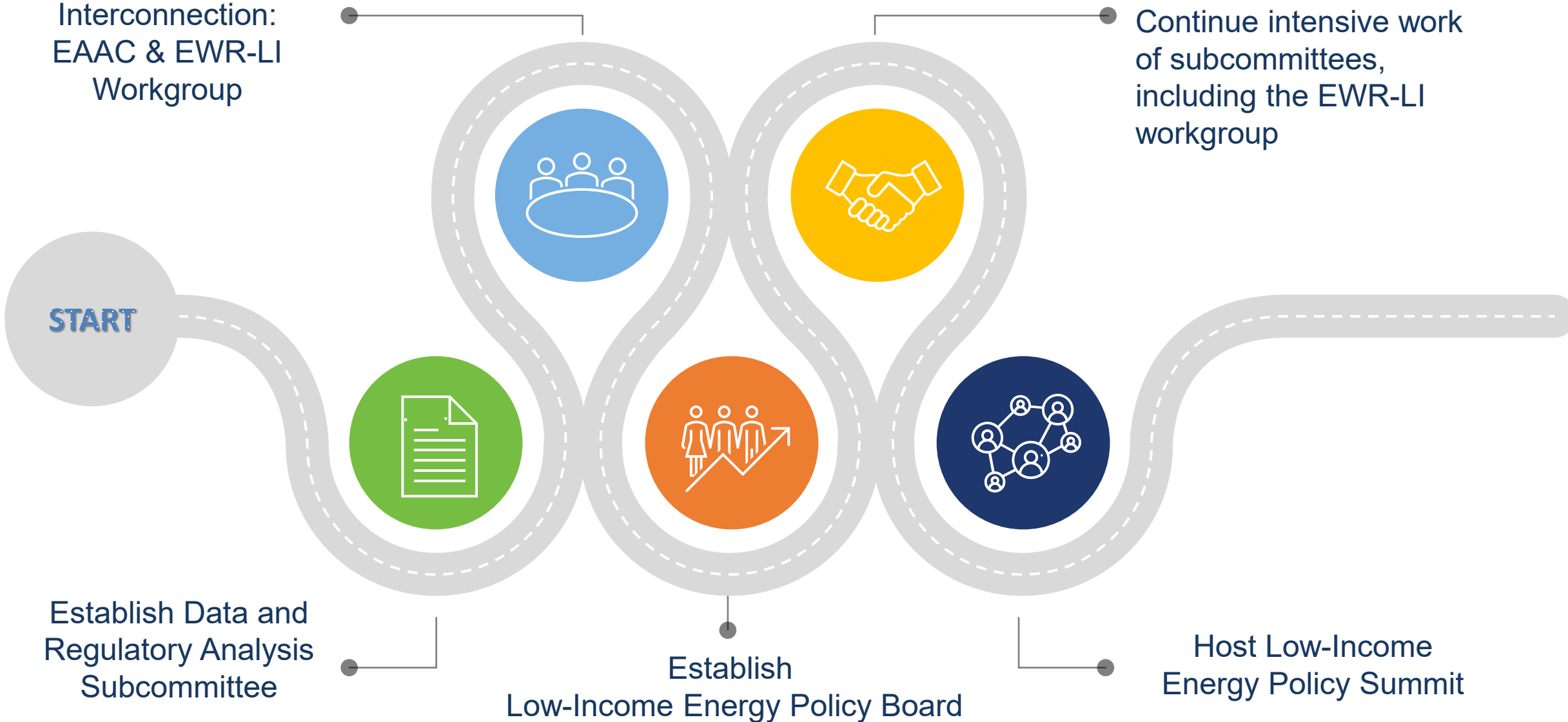
- Continue the Collaborative for at least two additional years with assessment in the future as to the Collaborative's lifespan.
- Direct investor-owned utilities to continue to file monthly reports in this docket detailing the data on shutoffs and arrearages.
- File a progress report to be filed no later than December 16, 2022.

## Directives This Board Addresses

- Adopt the proposed structure of the Collaborative, including an Advisory Committee comprised of EAAC and EWR – LI leadership.
- Increase participation of historically marginalized communities in policy development and leadership, working with MPSC DEI Committee.
- Collaborate with the Governor's Poverty Task Force, the Governor's Council on Climate Solutions, and the Council on Future Mobility and Electrification to contribute to cohesive policy across state agencies.



# Where We're Going



Interconnection:  
EAAC & EWR-LI  
Workgroup

Continue intensive work  
of subcommittees,  
including the EWR-LI  
workgroup

START

Establish Data and  
Regulatory Analysis  
Subcommittee

Establish  
Low-Income Energy Policy Board

Host Low-Income  
Energy Policy Summit

# About the Board



Michigan Public Service Commission

Health & Safety

Workforce Development

Affordability, Alignment, Assistance

Outreach & Education

Data Analysis & Regulatory Review

Definitions: Ad hoc

Energy Waste Reduction  
Low Income Workgroup

Energy Affordability and Accessibility Collaborative

Board Members:  
With Lived Experience

Board Members:  
Stakeholders and Staff Policy Experts

Board Members:  
Policy Leaders

# Low-Income Energy Policy Board

# Nature and Responsibilities of this Board

## Nature of the Board

- Advisory in nature
- Comprised of stakeholders
- This board may evolve over time

## Responsibilities of the Board

- Cross-pollination and system coordination
  - Bring insights and knowledge from your experience and work
  - Share insights and knowledge from this board where there is cross-over or synergy with other efforts you are involved in
- Communication
  - Make connections
  - Raise Concerns
  - Share Insights
- Decision-making
  - Help guide the work of EWR-LI and EAAC subcommittees
  - Consider recommendations to the Public Service Commission
- Planning
  - Bring your ideas and suggestions
  - Innovation



Energy Waste Reduction  
Low-Income Workgroup



# Energy Waste Reduction Low-Income Workgroup

Brad Banks

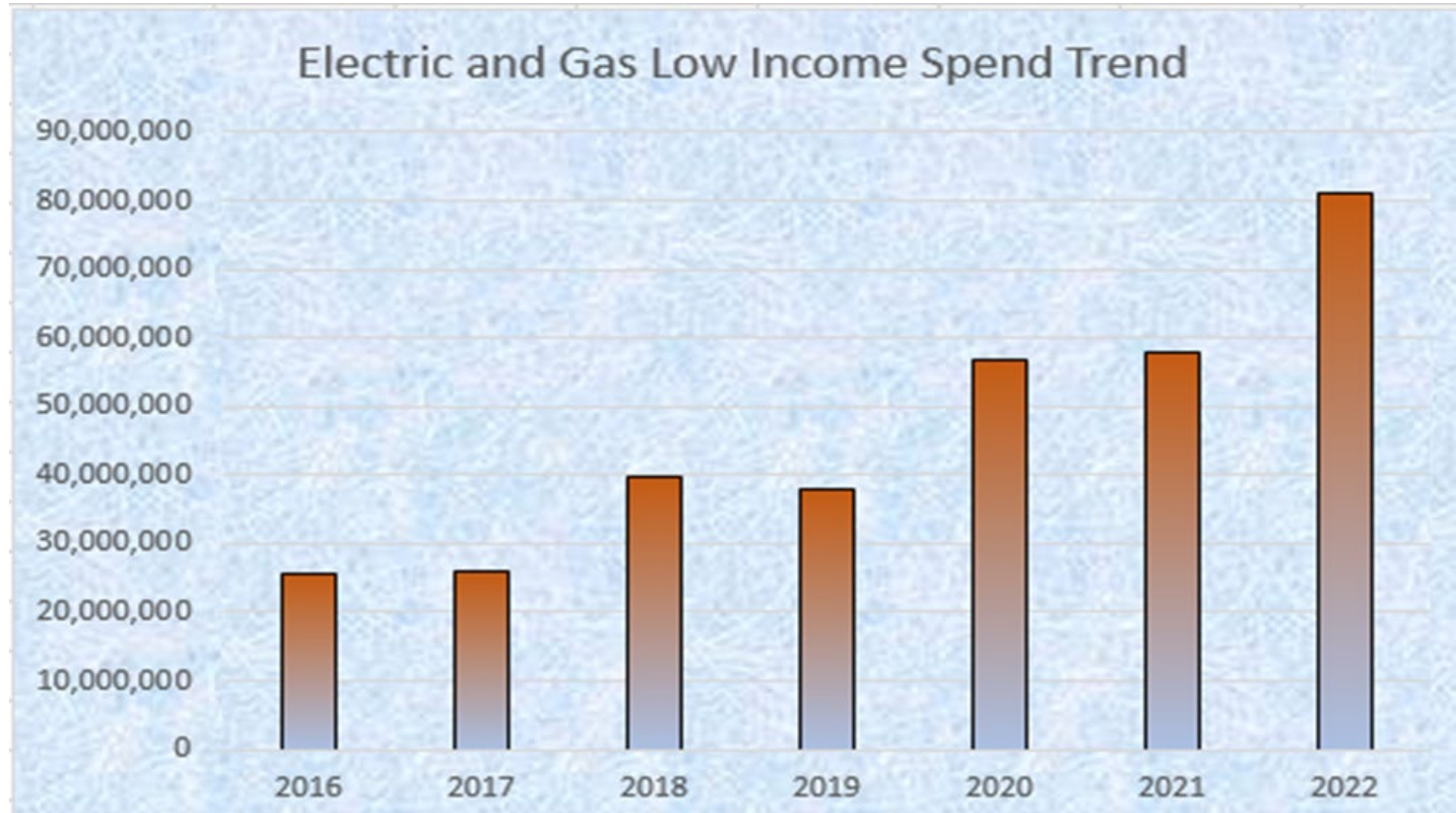
## How it began

- MPSC approached by stakeholder groups
- Kicked off on April 6, 2018

## Who participates

- Private, public, non-profit stakeholders and developed as a stakeholder driven initiative
- State and Federal Agencies and state universities
- 100+ participating stakeholder groups, 400+ individuals

# EWR Low-Income Programming



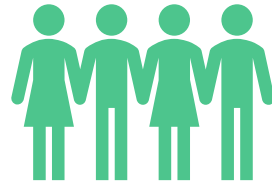
- All utility providers must offer low-income programs
- All customers pay into the low-income funding for the service territory
- Utilities decide the level of low-income programming offered, but this has grown over the years of the EWR programs.
  - Contested case process allows intervention by interested stakeholders and have assisted in guiding this funding to larger levels and more comprehensive programming

\*2021 and 2022 are projections based on plan filings.

# Low-Income Workgroup Subcommittees



Health and Safety;  
NEB/NEI data collection



Workforce Development



Information and assistance services  
clearinghouse (211 project)



# Low-Income Workgroup Collaboration

DHHS Social Determinants of Health

WAP Deferral Mitigation

Environmental Justice/Energy Equity

Coordinate with EAAC Subcommittees

# Energy Waste Reduction Low-Income Workgroup

## Accomplishments

- Making connections
- Developing new partnerships
- Discovering the intersectionality
  - Very diverse services
  - Perspectives
  - Expertise
- Working together to create an entirely new way of thinking about our job and programming

## Intersection with this Board

- Utilize this mindset and understanding to be the most impactful and realize our full potential

# Concepts Inherent in Low-Income Energy Policy



Affordability



Efficiency



Environment



Equity



Health



Justice



Safety



Security



Supply

# Subcommittee Presentations



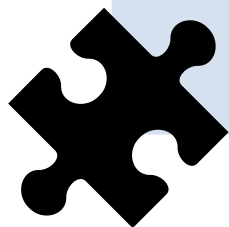
# Definitions Subcommittee Report

## Mary Wilkins, MPSC Subcommittee Co-chair

### Charge and Goals

#### Commission Charge

- Establish common definition of energy security/self-sufficiency – begin with proposed definition by MEAP Workgroup Subcommittee.
- Develop proposal for an energy affordability standard and how the standard can be integrated into the regulatory environment.
- Draft suggested requirements for consistent energy affordability-related information for utilities to submit to appropriate dockets: rate cases, IRPs, EWR cases.



### Stakeholder Involvement

#### Who is the subcommittee comprised of?

- There are 21 individuals signed up for the subcommittee with 12 to 15 in attendance at any given meeting.
  - A third of participants represent utilities
  - A quarter represent advocacy groups
  - Another quarter are SOM employees
  - The balance are service agencies

#### Methods used for gaining stakeholder input

- Discussions within committee meetings
- Invitations to submit email comments
- Surveying committee members

# Definitions Subcommittee Progress and Next Steps

## Progress to date

Began work in August 2021, meeting bi-weekly  
Reviewed concepts related to self-sufficiency and energy security  
Surveyed committee members at key points, narrowing definitions to three  
Surveyed stakeholders including front line workers and assistance seekers, utility companies, and advocacy membership organizations. Received feedback from 300+ respondents  
Applied survey results to draft definitions and Identified a proposed definition

## Next steps

Develop a companion document and recommend a definition of Energy Affordability to the Low-Income Energy Policy Board - July 2022  
Develop a proposal for an energy affordability standard - November 2022  
Determine how the standard can be integrated into the regulatory environment



## **Opportunities for Collaboration with other committees or groups**

Once the work on the definition's companion document is completed, in considering a standard, there may be cross-over with AAA and DARR.



## **Questions and/or Suggestions for the Board**

Energy affordability is most commonly calculated by dividing annual energy costs by annual income.

Through committee discussions and constituent surveys, it became apparent that affordability is more complex than this simple calculation.

Customers want us to know that health and wellness, safety, efficiency, and sustainability are important considerations in assessing the affordability of energy.

Definitions Subcommittee Discussion Items  
Presenter: Mary Wilkins

# Affordability, Alignment, and Assistance Subcommittee Report

## Jamie Curtis, MPSC Subcommittee Co-chair

### Charge and Goals

#### Commission Charge

- Streamlining and making more accessible existing energy assistance programs
- Researching next generation affordable payment plans
- Analyzing collections processes and disconnections
- Integrating with EWR, weatherization, and rate design

#### Guiding Statement

- End the crisis-assistance-crisis cycle by centering energy affordability and facilitating customers sustainably affording their energy bills by providing all households with uninterrupted access to affordable, sufficient energy in an efficient, healthy, and sustainable manner.
  - Ensuring equitable distribution
  - Centering impacted community priorities
  - Treating customers with dignity
  - Coordinating and communicating clearly



### Stakeholder Involvement

#### Who is the subcommittee comprised of?

- Representatives from various community organizations, utilities, regulators, policy-makers, energy contractors, state and local government employees, researchers/evaluators, as well as impacted/interested community members

#### Methods used for gaining stakeholder input

- Anonymous surveys, open dialogue, previous Google Doc, emails, and continue to explore other virtual collaboration tools



# Affordability, Alignment, and Assistance Progress and Next Steps

## Progress to date

- Finished education on customer enrollment journeys for all energy assistance programs
- Created a document explaining all programs and depicting all customer journeys
- Discussed recommended improvements on the current system



## Next steps

- Do our current assistance programs work?
- Analysis of RIA/LIA, MEAP, SER, HHC, EWR referrals
- Begin work on affordability issues
- Collaborate with definitions subcommittee and poverty taskforce
- Another Commission report
- Recommendation on affordability
- MEAP renewal recommendation



## **Opportunities for Collaboration with other committees or groups**

EWR-LI: working with Brad Banks on optimizing EWR referrals for assistance recipients

DARR: looking into data required to determine program effectiveness

Outreach Subcommittee: recommendations on customer outreach

Ad-hoc Definitions Subcommittee: some affordability work



## **Questions and/or Suggestions for the Board**

How should the AAA implement recommendations?

- Work directly with utilities/MEAP grantees to implement process improvement recommendations?
- Have the Commission create an order on their own motion for utility matters?
- How does the board plan to approach state legislative change if called for?

Are there any other topics the AAA should address?

Affordability Alignment and Assistance  
Subcommittee Discussion Items  
Presenter: Jamie Curtis

# Outreach and Education Subcommittee Report

## Briana DuBose, Stakeholder Subcommittee Co-chair

### Commission Charge

#### Commission Charge

- Establish regular mechanism for stakeholders to provide input on improving communications and materials
- Broaden outreach to groups traditionally not a part of utility communications
- Improve the dissemination of energy assistance information to difficult to reach customers

#### Committee Goals

- Establish a process for stakeholder and community-based input re: materials and communications channels
- Review and provide input for improving the Commission's Energy Assistance Toolkit which will be updated and reissued Oct. 1, 2022, for the 2022/2023 heating season
- Identify community-based groups, not already a part of the Commission's outreach, that will partner with the Commission to disseminate assistance information for the 2022/2023 heating season

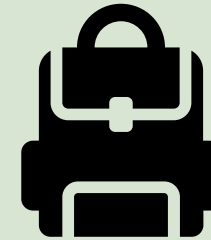
### Stakeholder Involvement

#### Who is the subcommittee comprised of?

- Community agencies
- Energy advocates
- Utilities

#### Methods used for gaining stakeholder input

- Breakout groups
- Committee discussion
- E-mail



# Outreach and Education Subcommittee Progress and Next Steps

## Progress and Next Steps

The subcommittee has identified and reinforced its guiding values and has had several discussions regarding outreach and education opportunities and challenges.



## Next steps

Finalize goals and Subcommittee workplan (May)

Begin work on the Commission's charge to establish a regular mechanism for stakeholders to provide input on improving communications and materials:

Identifying materials to which the charge applies

Identifying gaps in currently available Commission materials related to energy accessibility, affordability, and assistance.

Defining the role of stakeholders in materials development



## **Opportunities for Collaboration with other committees or groups**

The Commission hosted its first Resource Fair and Listening Session in Gaylord on April 18, the subcommittee worked with the Definitions and AAA subcommittees to identify topics for discussion during the listening sessions.

As materials are developed and prepared for distribution for the 2022/2023 heating season, opportunities for collaboration exist with both the MEAP workgroup and the Coalition to Keep MI Warm.

Potential to collaborate with MDHHS in their Social Determinants of Health work



## **Questions and/or Suggestions for the Board**

None at this time

Outreach and Education  
Subcommittee Discussion Items  
Presenter: Briana DuBose

# Data Analysis and Regulatory Review Subcommittee Report

## Anne Armstrong, EAAC Leader

### Charge and Goals

#### Commission Charge

- Develop a long-term data collection strategy and review existing customer protections. The focus is separated into two parts
  - Data analysis
  - Regulatory review of the Consumer Standards and Billing Practices for Electric and Natural Gas Service (Billing Rules)

#### Committee Goals

- Engage in discussions that will assist MPSC Staff in preparing a report providing recommendations to be filed in December 2022, under Case No. U-20757.
- Continue to focus on the data needs and rule based-protections for: purpose of identifying and addressing customer protection and affordability moving forward

### Stakeholder Involvement

#### Who is the subcommittee comprised of?

- MPSC Staff, utilities, advocates, action agencies, & other state departments

#### Methods used for gaining stakeholder input

- Participants can share ideas, opinions, concerns, etc. during the open session via voice or chat, stakeholder leads contacts, suggestion box, and a future survey.



# Data Analysis and Regulatory Review Progress and Next Steps

## Progress to date

Launched on March 15, 2022, the subcommittee is setting foundational education on what type of data the Commission currently collects and a clear understanding of each point.



## Next steps

Future meetings will consist of open dialogue addressing the need for additional data to understand affordability trends and for additional protections or services.



### **Opportunities for Collaboration with other committees or groups**

Anyone can join the subcommittee at any time.  
Meetings are conducted the third Thursday of the  
month from 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.



### **Questions and/or Suggestions for the Board**

None at this time

Data Analysis and Regulatory Review Subcommittee  
Discussion Items  
Presenter: Anne Armstrong

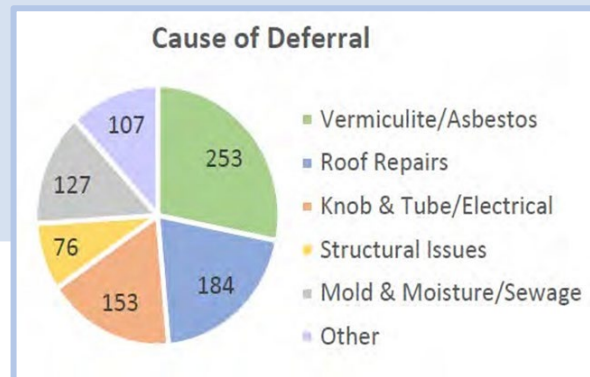


# Health and Safety Subcommittee Report

## Alexis Blizman, Stakeholder Co-chair

### Goals

- Engage Stakeholders working on deferral reduction and health and safety issues in homes that prevent weatherization and energy efficiency measures from being installed
- Develop Policies that enable health and safety interventions
- Seek funding to enable implementation



### Stakeholder Involvement

#### Stakeholders

- Community Action Agencies
- Implementation Organizations
- Community Based Organizations
- State Agencies
- Utilities
- Energy, Housing, and Environmental Advocates
- Universities
- Municipalities

# Health and Safety Subcommittee Progress and Next Steps

## Progress to date

Health & Safety Pilots in all regulated utilities  
\$5M Pilot and Deferral Reduction Workgroup established within MDHHS  
Expanded awareness of issue

## Next Steps

Candidate and Legislator Education  
Advocacy for additional state funding  
Monitor utility pilots and suggest program design improvements  
Establish health & safety measures as permanent offerings within utility low income EWR programs



## **Opportunities for Collaboration with other committees or groups**

Joint efforts with other committees (Workforce Development/MI 411)



## **Questions and/or Suggestions for the Board**

### **Get Involved**

Meets Monthly on the Fourth Tuesday at 10:00 am

Health and Safety Subcommittee  
Subcommittee Discussion Items  
Presenter: Alexis Blizman

# Workforce Development Subcommittee Report

## Tim Skrotzki, Subcommittee Member

### Goals

#### **Engage Stakeholders working on workforce across the state to centralize information**

- Identify and engage current and new partners (specifically contractors)
- Develop a centralized place for information sharing, specifically existing and new training opportunities across the state
- Create wider contractor network to identify needs

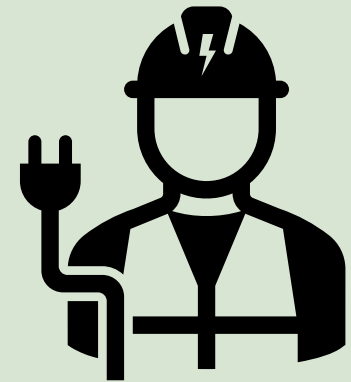
#### **Coordination of Workforce Growth Opportunities**

- Infrastructure bill includes weatherization funds and other \$\$\$ opportunities
- Identify partners who are tracking efforts at the grassroots and state level

### Stakeholder Involvement

#### **Who is the subcommittee comprised of?**

- Community Action Agencies
- Implementation Organizations
- Community Based Organizations
- Contractor Associations
- Utilities
- Energy Advocates



# Workforce Development Subcommittee Progress and Next Steps

## Progress to date

Launched January 2022  
Meet monthly – every 2<sup>nd</sup> Friday 9am-10:30am

## Next Steps

Continue engaging stakeholders and inventory resources

- Organizational spotlights every meeting

Inviting new stakeholders including contractors – building listserv/ database



**Opportunities for Collaboration  
with other committees or groups**



**Questions and/or Suggestions  
for the Board**

Workforce Development  
Subcommittee Discussion Items  
Presenter: Tim Skrotzki

# Board Discussion



Michigan Public Service Commission

# Collaborations



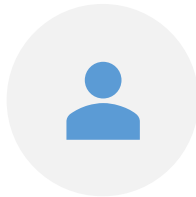
Definitions - In considering a standard, there may be cross-over with AAA and DARR.



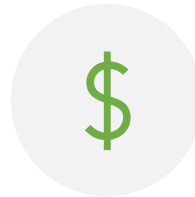
AAA - EWR-LI: working with Brad Banks on optimizing EWR referrals for assistance recipients



AAA - DARR: looking into data required to determine program effectiveness



AAA – O&E: recommendations on customer outreach



AAA - Definitions Subcommittee: some affordability work



O&E - As materials are developed and prepared for distribution for the 2022/2023 heating season, opportunities for collaboration exist with both the MEAP workgroup and the Coalition to Keep MI Warm.



O&E - Potential to collaborate with MDHHS in their Social Determinants of Health work



# Subcommittee Questions / Suggestions

Constituents want us to know that health and wellness, safety, efficiency, and sustainability are important considerations in assessing the affordability of energy.

How should the AAA implement recommendations?

- Work directly with utilities/MEAP grantees to implement process improvement recommendations?
- Have the Commission create an order on their own motion for utility matters?
- How does the board plan to approach state legislative change if called for?

Are there any other topics the AAA should address?

Q&A



Michigan Public Service Commission

# Next Steps

## Meet monthly

- Meeting cadence: 4th Monday, 10:00 – 11:30
  - Committee presentations
  - Discussion topics
- Serve as a sounding board

## Homework

- Reflect on Discussion Topics
- Come with thoughts on how you think this board can impact system issues
- Prepare to discuss LIEP Board goals

## Plan a Low-Income Energy Summit

- Early November 2022
- Planning committee sign up

Thank You!

