



2019

State of the State

Governor Gretchen Whitmer

Governor Whitmer's Legislative Initiatives in the 2019 State of the State Address

Governor Whitmer's first State of the State address outlined the challenges facing our state, highlighted actions taken to address these issues, and set a blueprint for legislative priorities. Below are five different legislative initiatives that Governor Whitmer outlined in her speech:

Hands-Free Laws

Governor Whitmer called on the legislature to join 16 other states in adopting hands-free driving laws, which ban any use of a mobile devices while driving, with a few exceptions, under penalty of law.

In 2016, 3,450 people were killed in distracted driving accidents in the U.S. and nearly 400,000 were injured in 2015. Currently in Michigan, texting while driving is illegal. However, it is difficult to enforce and leaves many other forms of phone use open to drivers in Michigan. The proposed legislation would ban any use of a mobile device by any driver of any type of vehicle except emergency responders or someone legitimately requesting emergency services via 911.

The first offense would be \$100 or 16 hours of community service or both. The second would be \$250 or 24 hours of community service or both. If someone using a mobile device causes an accident, they shall be subject to double the fines above and could lose their license for up to 90 days for multiple incidences.

Requires Legislature Approval: Yes



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Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act

Governor Whitmer called on the legislature to expand the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act (ELCRA) to include sexual orientation, preference and identity, which would broaden protections to those in the LGBTQ community who face discrimination daily but are currently outside the scope of the law.

The ELCRA prohibits discriminatory practices and policies (in employment, housing, and public accommodation) based upon religion, race, color, national origin, age, sex, height, weight, familial status and marital status. The ELCRA prohibits employers from discriminating in hiring, compensation and terms/conditions of employment. Without the expansion, it is currently legal in Michigan to fire or refuse to hire someone based upon their sexual orientation, preference, or identity. This current status of the law is antiquated and unfair. It is seen by the business community in Michigan as a detriment to talent recruitment to our state and a hindrance to Michigan's economic comeback.

Requires Legislature Approval: Yes



Postsecondary Attainment Goal

Governor Whitmer announced a new statewide goal to increase the number of Michiganders with a postsecondary credential (a high-quality industry certificate, associate degree or higher) to 60 percent by 2030. State departments, educational institutions and communities can align their collective educational efforts around the intent of increasing household income.

The association between state income and education levels is strong. Highly educated states boast some of the highest per-capita incomes in the country. Michigan, however, ranks 36th for postsecondary educational attainment and 34th for household income.

As of 2016, 43.7 percent Michiganders (ages 16 – 64) possessed a postsecondary credential. Over the last few years Michigan has made progress in increasing educational attainment, but still lags when compared to the national average (46.9 percent) and other Midwest states (IL 60 percent, IN 60 percent, MO 60 percent, MN 70 percent, IA 70 percent, OH 65 percent, WI 60 percent). Michigan is one of just nine states that has not formally adopted a statewide postsecondary attainment goal.

Setting a postsecondary achievement goal for Michigan would provide a clear metric to measure the economic health and competitiveness of our state and focus efforts across state government, educational institutions, and the community at large.

Michigan Reconnect and the Michigan Opportunity Scholarship will play a large role in helping Michigan residents reach this goal.



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Michigan Reconnect

Modeled on a highly successful bipartisan program in Tennessee, Michigan Reconnect is an economic-growth/workforce development program that would provide a tuition-free pathway to an in-demand industry certificate or associate degree for Michigan adults (25+).

Michigan Opportunity Scholarship

The Michigan Opportunity Scholarship offers two paths to help graduating high school students obtain a postsecondary credential. Path I provides graduating high school students with two years of tuition-free postsecondary education at a community college. This program is again modeled on a successful bipartisan program in Tennessee that seeks to address the expected skills gap and fill the workforce needs of businesses in the state. Path II provides two years of tuition assistance at a public or not-for-profit four-year university for students demonstrating financial need.



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Michigan Reconnect

Governor Whitmer announced three career pathways for workers and students across our state. The first pathway, Michigan Reconnect, is an economic-growth/workforce development program that would provide a tuition-free pathway to an in-demand industry certificate or associate degree for Michigan adults aged 25 and older. MI Reconnect would up-skill adults looking to take the next step in their careers; assist employers seeking a source of qualified talent; create an avenue for displaced workers to reenter the workforce; and would also market Michigan as a place with a highly skilled population.

Together with the MI Opportunity Scholarship, Michigan Reconnect will play a key role in helping Michigan reach its postsecondary attainment goal of 60 percent by 2030.

Michigan Reconnect	
Financial Support	Tuition free (State pays remaining tuition and mandatory fees not met by Pell or other state assistance awards)
Credential Goal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical certification • Associate degree • Transfer to 4-year institution
Providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Michigan public community colleges • Nonprofit institution with industry recognized certificate programs • Union apprenticeship programs
Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Michigan high school graduates 25 and older without a Bachelor's or Associate degree who enroll the fall following graduation or completion of GED • Michigan resident for at least one year • Must complete annual FAFSA • Must maintain good academic standing while enrolled as determined by the community college or appropriate institution • Enrolled at least part time
Merit/Means Test	None; Universal



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Timeline	Students have 3 years to complete 60 credits (with exceptions made for medical, military, and family hardships)
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As part of the Michigan Reconnect Program, funding would be provided to support academic and career counseling to ensure students are informed about pathways and related course selection. These investments will ensure students are taking the courses they need to complete the program and for every course to count toward that end.

Case Study: The Michigan Reconnect Program is modeled after Tennessee Reconnect, a highly successful and bipartisan program that provides grants for students 25 and older to earn an associate degree or technical certificate free of tuition or fees. Tennessee Reconnect is in its first year, but is already surpassing expectations. According to data from the Tennessee Higher Education Commission, much of the interest in Tennessee Reconnect is driven by women, with 22,062 applying for the program — or about 71 percent of all applicants.

The extent of individual economic opportunity and the health of our state’s economy overall is directly correlated to how accessible high-quality postsecondary education is. Since 2010, nearly all – 99 percent – of the jobs added to our nation’s economy have gone to workers with at least some postsecondary attainment. Further, Michigan needs to fill an additional 15,000 jobs in skilled trades every year until 2024 to meet demand. It is clear our workforce is not equipped to meet this demand.

Establishing Michigan Reconnect will help to ensure current and future workforce have the skills necessary to fill these jobs, while also marketing Michigan as a place with a highly skilled population.

Legislative Action Required: Yes



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MI Opportunity Scholarship

Governor Whitmer announced three career pathways for workers and students across our state. The Michigan Opportunity Scholarship, which contains the second and third paths, provides graduating high school students with two years of tuition-free postsecondary education at a community college (Path I); or tuition assistance for the first two years at a public or private not-for-profit four-year institution (Path II).

The association between state income and education levels is strong. Highly educated states boast some of the highest per-capita incomes in the country. Michigan ranks 36th for post-secondary educational attainment (the number of residents with a high-quality industrial certificate, associate degree or higher) and 34th for household income. MI Opportunity would address this shortfall by enabling more Michigan adults to complete a postsecondary degree.

Together with Michigan Reconnect, the MI Opportunity Scholarship will play a key role in helping Michigan reach its postsecondary attainment goal of 60 percent by 2030.

Path I of the MI Opportunity Scholarship provides graduating high school students with two years of tuition-free postsecondary education.

MI Opportunity Scholarship – Path I	
Financial Support	Tuition free (State pays remaining tuition and mandatory fees not met by Pell or other state assistance awards)
Credential Goal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Technical certification · Associate degree · Transfer to 4-year institution
Providers	Michigan public community colleges



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Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · All MI high school graduates without a Bachelor’s or Associate degree who enroll the fall following graduation or completion of GED · MI resident for at least one year · Must complete annual FAFSA · Must maintain good academic standing while enrolled as determined by educational institution · Enrolled at least part time
Merit/Means Test	None; Universal
Timeline	Students have 3 years to complete 60 credits (with exceptions made for medical, military, and family hardships)

Transfer agreements to enable those students who can move smoothly on to four-year institutions are an important element of the program, ensuring that a bachelor’s degree option is available and that four-year institutions understand benefits to their own enrollment.

Two-year graduation rates at community colleges are generally low (below 25 percent). To reverse this trend, the program would provide funding for campus-based counselors (“success coaches” or “navigators”) who provide students with wrap around support services, incentives to stay enrolled, and connections to afterschool and summer jobs/internships. Other states with similar programs have found that dollar for dollar, funding a college navigator for students will produce more degrees than additional financial aid.

Path II provides high school students with two years of tuition assistance at a four-year public or private not-for-profit college/university.



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MI Opportunity Scholarship Path II	
Financial Support	Tuition assistance of \$2500 annually for 2 years
Credential Goal	Bachelor's degree
Providers	Michigan public and not for profit private four-year college or university
Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none">· All MI high school graduates without a Bachelor's or Associate degree who enroll the fall following graduation or completion of GED· Michigan resident for at least one year· Must complete annual FAFSA· Must maintain good academic standing while enrolled as determined by educational institution
Merit/Means Test	<ul style="list-style-type: none">· GPA: 3.0 or better· Household Income: under \$80k
Timeline	Enrolled full time for two consecutive years (with exceptions made for medical, military, and family hardships)

The extent of individual economic opportunity and the health of our state's economy overall is directly correlated to the accessibility of high-quality postsecondary education. Since 2010, nearly all – 99 percent – of the jobs added to our nation's economy have gone to workers with at least some postsecondary attainment. Further, Michigan needs to fill an additional 15,000 jobs in skilled trades every year until 2024 to meet demand. It is clear our workforce is not equipped to meet this demand.



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Establishing the MI Opportunity Scholarship will help to ensure Michigan's current and future workforce have the skills necessary to fill these jobs, while also marketing Michigan as a place with a highly skilled population.

Note: TED would oversee Michigan Reconnect and the MI Opportunity Scholarship as modes to achieve the postsecondary attainment goal. Other departments will be expected to assist in achieving this goal.

Legislative Action Required: Yes