



## **UPDATES FROM THE CAPITOL**

### **May 28 - June 10, 2024**

#### **MEDICAID COVERAGE CONTINUES TO CLIMB: MORE THAN 1.6M RENEWALS**

Over 137,000 individuals have now renewed their Medicaid and Healthy Michigan Plan coverage, totaling over 1.6 million Michigan citizens who retained their insurance. Elizabeth Hertel, director of MDHHS, stated that allowing residents an additional month to turn in paperwork enabled 21,000 people to continue their coverage per month. Additional procedures that encourage coverage retention have been approved through June of 2025, including a 90-day reconsideration period for those deemed ineligible based on procedural issues, removing the additional income determination for families enrolled in TANF or SNAP, easy contact methods for beneficiaries, and renewal based on asset verification.

#### **MICHIGAN SEES DECLINE IN UNEMPLOYMENT RATES ACROSS 15 OUT OF 17 REGIONS**

In April, unemployment rates fell in 15 of Michigan's 17 labor market areas, according to the Department of Technology, Management and Budget. Prior to this spring, all 17 areas experienced a year-over-year increase in unemployment, with a median rise of 0.5%. However, beginning in April there was a median decrease in unemployment at a rate of 0.2%, with rates ranging from 3% to 6.8%. The largest reduction was in Northeast Lower Michigan, while Flint and Muskegon saw no change.

Over the past year, employment rose in 14 markets, with a median increase of 1.2%, and Niles showing the most growth. Unemployment rate reductions were noted in 68 of 83 counties, with Livingston County having the lowest rate of unemployment at 2.5% and Mackinac County with the highest at 14.3%. The Upper Peninsula saw the biggest decrease in labor force levels at 1.1%, but there was a median decrease of 0.7% across the state. The sectors with the most added employment opportunities were professional and business service industries and construction.

#### **PENDING SUPREME COURT RULING ON MI MINIMUM WAGE LAW COULD HAVE SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS**

Governor Gretchen Whitmer and Michigan Legislators are bracing for potential upheaval should the state's minimum wage law be invalidated by the Michigan Supreme Court. If the court strikes down the existing law, which allows tips to count towards minimum wage, Michigan could see its minimum wage potentially rise to over \$13 per hour. Advocates for the wage increase, such as One Fair Wage, believe an increased wage is essential to filling low-wage job vacancies. However, critics in the hospitality industry worry that the prices of food and beverages will rise and layoffs may occur due to restaurant labor costs increasing by 250%. The fate of Michigan's paid sick leave law also hangs in the balance.

Whitmer and State Lawmakers are considering their options, weighing the need to uphold the spirit of voter initiatives while ensuring the viability of small businesses. Worker advocates are pushing for further increases in the minimum wage to \$15 by 2027, while industry representatives

emphasize the importance of retaining the tip credit system. The court's decision, expected by the end of July, could have far-reaching implications for Michigan's economy and political landscape.

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### **SECRETARY BENSON AND BUSINESS LEADERS UNITE ON ELECTION SECURITY**

At the 2024 Mackinac Policy Conference, Michigan Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson recently announced a new collaboration with the Detroit Regional Chamber and business leaders from across the state, which they're calling Michigan Business United for Elections coalition. This nonpartisan group was created to educate citizens about their voting rights and encourage participation in elections. The coalition has committed to serving three key goals: (1) Partners will encourage their employees to volunteer to work the polls in August and November, (2) they will promote education around voting in a nonpartisan manner, and (3) they are guaranteeing that employees will have adequate time off to vote either on Election day or beforehand. This collaboration unites the state with Michigan businesses in efforts to support safe and secure elections.

### **GOVERNOR UNVEILS HOUSING AND ENERGY INITIATIVES FOR MICHIGANDERS**

Governor Gretchen Whitmer announced ambitious housing and energy initiatives at the Mackinac Policy Conference this year, increasing Michigan's five-year housing production goal by 53% and securing federal funds to lower energy costs for 28,000 low-income households. The initiatives are part of the MI Healthy Climate Plan that aims to build 115,000 housing units and incorporate measures to drive energy efficiency, with the ultimate goals of making housing and utilities more affordable for Michiganders.

The Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) has already invested \$1.23 billion to build and restore homes, creating 20,000 new jobs. The Governor also proclaimed that the state has received \$367 million in federal funding to support the Michigan Solar for All initiative and the Home Energy Rebate programs. The Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) will head the project to cut utility costs, install solar equipment on roofs, and decrease the costs of energy-efficient appliances. Together, these programs aim to reduce energy costs and promote renewable energy for low-income Michigan homes.



