

## UPDATES FROM THE CAPITOL

### June 10 - 24, 2025

#### UPCOMING EVENTS

**Friday, July 4, 2025**

Independence Day (Office Closed)

#### MICHIGAN REACHES HISTORIC LOW IN INFANT MORTALITY RATE

Michigan celebrated a milestone in maternal and infant health this year, reporting its lowest infant mortality rate on record. In 2023, the state recorded 607 infant deaths - down from 650 the year before - bringing the overall rate to 6.1 per 1,000 live births. While disparities remain, there was notable progress among Black infants as well, with the mortality rate falling to a historic low of 11.9 per 1,000 live births. The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) attributes this encouraging trend to continued investment in programs that strengthen community-centered care, expand access to resources, and support new parents throughout pregnancy and early childhood.

Through its Healthy Moms, Healthy Babies initiative, MDHHS has expanded postpartum Medicaid coverage and invested in evidence-based care models like doula services and CenteringPregnancy. Doulas, particularly those serving with organizations like the Black Mothers Breastfeeding Association, have played a vital role in improving outcomes for women of color by providing trusted emotional and educational support. Meanwhile, programs such as the Michigan Perinatal Quality Collaboratives and MI AIM are working at the hospital and community level to improve access to prenatal care, promote safe sleep practices, and implement safety protocols to reduce complications.

#### AG JOINS \$7.4 BILLION SETTLEMENT WITH SACKLER FAMILY & PURDUE PHARMA OVER OPIOID CRISIS

According to state Attorney General Dana Nessel, every state and territorial attorneys general in the United States (55 in total) has unanimously agreed to sign onto a \$7.4 billion nationwide settlement with pharmaceutical giant Purdue Pharma and its owners, the Sackler family, over their role in the country's opioid crisis. The agreement, which would resolve years of litigation, marks the largest settlement to date involving names associated with causing the epidemic. It would permanently end the Sacklers' control of Purdue and bar them from future opioid sales anywhere in the nation.

Michigan could receive up to \$154 million over 15 years to fund addiction prevention, treatment, and recovery programs, with most of the funds distributed in the first three years. Nessel highlighted the progress Michigan has already made from previous settlements with over \$1.6 billion secured during her tenure, contributing to a 34% drop in overdose deaths between 2023 and 2024. Final approval of the Purdue settlement now depends on bankruptcy court proceedings and local government participation.

## **PREVIOUS GOP HOUSE SPEAKER TOM LEONARD JOINS RACE FOR GOVERNOR**

Former House Speaker Tom Leonard (R-DeWitt) has announced his candidacy for Michigan governor in 2026, marking his third run for statewide office. Leonard, who served in the House from 2013 to 2018 and was Speaker in his final term, previously came up short in attorney general races in 2018 and 2022.

His campaign will focus on improving third-grade reading scores, expanding mental health care access, and increasing government transparency by applying FOIA rules to the executive branch. Leonard also supports lowering taxes, reducing regulations, and reinstating the Right-to-Work law. He currently leads the government relations practice at Plunkett Cooney law firm.

Leonard joins a crowded GOP primary field alongside U.S. Rep. John James, former Attorney General Mike Cox, and current Senate Minority Leader Aric Nesbitt (R-Porter Township). The Democratic field includes Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson, Lt. Gov. Garlin Gilchrist, Genesee County Sheriff Chris Swanson, and Marni Sawicki, with Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan running as an independent.

More information on the ever-changing 2026 election is covered [here](#).

## **MDHHS RAISES CONCERNS OVER PROPOSED FOOD ASSISTANCE FUNDING CUTS**

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) has issued a warning that proposed reductions to the Food Assistance Program's administrative budget could lead to staffing shortages, reduced access to whole foods, and longer wait times for families seeking support. One of the programs most at risk of significant disruptions is the Special Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), which serves pregnant and breastfeeding women and children under five by providing nutritious foods through more than 1,400 contracted vendors across Michigan. Under the Senate's proposed MDHHS budget, administrative funding would be reduced by \$15 million compared to the current fiscal year.

According to department officials, the cuts could result in longer processing times for applications and renewals, especially as federal emergency aid phases out. While core program funding for benefits would remain in place, losses in administrative capacity may hinder the timely delivery of services to eligible families.

You may review the MDHHS presentation on the WIC program [here](#).

## **DEPARTMENT OF INSURANCE & FINANCIAL SERVICES SELECTS FAMILIAR FACE AS SENIOR CHIEF DEPUTY DIRECTOR**

The Michigan Department of Insurance and Financial Services (DIFS) has selected Laura Hall to rejoin the department as Senior Chief Deputy Director. Hall previously served as DIFS' Communications Director before becoming Director of Policy, Communications, and Engagement at the Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential (MiLEAP). In her new role, Hall will be responsible for overseeing all department operations and its regulation of the insurance and financial sectors. DIFS Director Anita Fox praised Hall's return, citing her leadership and public service experience as key assets to the department's mission of ensuring access to safe and secure financial and insurance services for Michigan residents.

## **HOUSE REPUBLICANS SELECT 2026 HRCC LEADERSHIP**

Speaker of the House Matt Hall (R-Richland Township) recently shared the names of his

appointees that will serve as House Republican Campaign Committee (HRCC) leadership leading into the 2026 election cycle. The new team will be responsible for guiding strategy, candidate support, and fundraising efforts as Republicans work to retain and grow their majority in the House.

The new HRCC leadership includes:

- Chair: Representative Parker Fairbairn (R-Harbor Springs)
- Vice Chair: Representative Brian BeGole (R-Perry)

Fairbairn and BeGole succeed Representative Bill Schuette (R-Midland), who served as chair during the 2024 election cycle.