

ABOUT US

The 15-member Michigan Women's Commission (MWC) was created by statute in 1968. Commission duties include reviewing the status of women in Michigan, directing attention to critical problems confronting women, and recognizing women's accomplishments and contributions to Michigan. Commissioners are appointed by the Governor and serve three-year terms.

Public Meeting

MWC held one public meeting in FY24 on April 16 in Jackson, MI.

Prior to the public meeting, MWC hosted a roundtable to promote pathways to high wage jobs for women focusing on Consumers Energy's skilled trades apprenticeship program. MWC was joined by guest speakers Melissa Gleespen, Chief Compliance Officer for Consumers Energy, Christina DuVall, Executive Director of Ethics and Compliance for Consumers Energy, and Trisha Schlegel, Economic Analyst for the Michigan Center for Data and Analytics (MCDA). Gleespen and DuVall shared how Consumers Energy supports women in their apprenticeship programs. Schlegel presented the key takeaways from the [2024 Women in the Michigan Workforce Report](#) (PDF) including Michigan women earn less than men regardless of full- or part-time work; the number of women in the Michigan labor force has recovered more slowly than men, and on average, women in Michigan are more educated than men.

View the [FY24 public meeting minutes \(PDF\)](#).

Committees

Financial Freedom Committee, chaired by Commissioner Dr. Tracy Joshua, focuses on actions to close gaps and increase access to income. Examples include pay equity and access to education and training for high wage jobs.

(= event affiliated with the Financial Freedom Committee.)*

Unlocking Opportunities Committee, chaired by Commissioner Karin Hopman, pursues initiatives to eliminate barriers to work. Examples include increasing the availability of affordable childcare, expanding paid leave and menopause in the workplace initiatives.

(◊ = event affiliated with the Unlocking Opportunities Committee.)

Visible Authentic Leadership Committee, chaired by Commissioner Vivian Pickard, explores policies that will increase the number of women serving in publicly visible leadership roles across sectors. Examples include incentives for promoting more women into corporate executive leadership, increasing the number of women serving on corporate, foundation and nonprofit boards, and encouraging more women to run for elected office at all levels of government.

(Δ= event affiliated with the Visible Authentic Leadership Committee.)

Program Highlights:

MI Tri-Share Child Care Program

The MI Tri-Share Child Care Program (MI Tri-Share) is an innovative approach to increasing access to high quality, affordable child care for working families, while also helping to retain talent and removing one major barrier to employment. Through MI Tri-Share, the cost of child care is shared equally by an eligible employee, their employer, and the State of Michigan, with coordination being provided regionally by a facilitator hub. MI Tri-Share was made a permanent ongoing program with the state's FY23 budget and was transferred to the new Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential (MiLEAP) in 2024.

While this work no longer falls under the Women's Commission, we are please to share that thanks to our efforts to launch this program, participation grew almost 100% between employers, employees and child care providers as of FY24. The program saw constant growth with 97% of families saying that participating in the program improved their financial stability. Additionally, 80% of the families agreed that the program helped them continue working in their current job. And of that 80%, 73% of families agreed that the program helped them continue working in their current job.

Additional details about MI Tri-Share are available at mitrishare.org.

MWC Bipartisan Legislative Women's Council

We launched the MWC Bipartisan Legislative Women's Council ("Women's Council") in early 2022 to facilitate greater communication and collaboration between MWC and women elected to Michigan's House. The Women's Council updates legislators on MWC's programs and resources to share with their constituents and facilitates collaboration with

the Michigan Legislature to advance economic security and opportunity for all of Michigan's women.

On Dec. 4, 2024, the Women's Council held a workshop for the Women's Council led by Anne Mervenne, Vice-Chair of the Michigan Council of Maternal & Child Health (MCMCH) and board member of the Children's Center in Detroit and Amy Zaagman, Executive Director of the MCMCH and Vernice Davis Anthony, former director of the Michigan Department of Health, about maternal mortality and how policy change can support better birth and maternal health outcomes.

21-Day Racial Equity Challenge

The 21-Day Racial Equity Challenge (21-Day) was created by and shared in partnership with the Michigan League for Public Policy to learn about the origins of race, how it influences communities and organizations and how it functions to preserve inequity in laws, institutions and systems. MWC is working with a scholar from Michigan State University to create a similar initiative that will address gender equity.

To learn more about the 21-Day or participate in the League's self-guided challenge visit Michigan.gov/MWC/21DayRacialEquityChallenge.

Appointments to the Commission

In September 2024, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer made two new appointments to MWC (Andrea Hunter of Detroit and Amanda Wagenschutz of Dexter), three reappointments (Kelli Saunders of Byron Center, Karin Hopman of Rockford, and Dr. Tracy Joshua of Battle Creek), and appointed Commissioner D. Sue Townsel of Royal Oak, as Chair of the Commission to replace outgoing Chair Dr. Geneva Williams, and Commissioner Lisa Cawley as the Vice Chair of the Commission.

Read the commissioner's biographies on the [Commissioners page](#).

New Staff & Community Partnerships

Shannon Garrett transitioned roles as the Chief Strategy Officer for MWC to the Senior Program Advisor for the Mi Tri-Share Child Care Program housed in MiLEAP.

Anna Rose Benson joined MWC as a full-time staff member as the Stakeholder Relations Lead.

MWC partnered with two Michigan State University scholar cohorts, the Community Engaged Scholars Program and the Social Science Scholars Program. Scholars are tasked with projects relating to MWC initiatives.

Events:

Highlights from MWC's FY24 events include:

Oct. 18, 2023: MWC collaborated with the Office of the Attorney General to debut and promote Michigan's new Address Confidentiality Program designed to help those at risk of harm by shielding the actual physical address, providing an official designated/substitute address and free mail forwarding service. The webinar featured Attorney General Dana Nessel and was moderated by Chair Williams.

The webinar is posted to MWC's YouTube channel [Understanding MI's New Address Confidentiality Program](#).

Nov. 27, 2023: MWC hosted the first roundtable to promote pathways to high wage jobs in collaboration with Commissioner Cawley, Managing Director at Accenture, to promote Accenture's IT apprenticeship program in Detroit. The roundtable participants consisted of community leaders, a current apprentice and an alumnus of the program and Gov. Gretchen Whitmer to share this unique pathway to a high wage job and highlighted the unique challenges and barriers women face entering and remaining in the workforce. (*)

Read the Crain's article [Whitmer starts roundtable tour focused on high-paying jobs for women](#).

Jan. 27, 2024: In collaboration with the Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan (GSSEM), MWC hosted the first in-person badge earning event of the mentorship program. The program paired older Girls Scouts with commissioners to teach them about women leadership in government and create lasting relationships that will enrich both the mentors and the mentees. In addition to the mentorship program, all levels of Girl Scouts were able to learn about women leadership in government by attending an in-person badge earning event and/or tuning into a Friday Night Live (FNL), a virtual speakers' series. The in-person badge earning event: Democracy & Me featured keynote speaker Secretary of State (SOS)

Jocelyn Benson in Detroit. Secretary Benson taught the girls the various functions and branches of government and highlighted the impact women have in the system, historically and in the future. (A)

Read the press release [GSSEM Welcomes Jocelyn Benson as the Keynote Speaker at Democracy & Me Day.](#)

March 18, 2024: MWC debuted the [2024 Women in the Michigan Workforce Report \(PDF\)](#) created in partnership with the Michigan Center for Data and Analytics (MCDA) The report aimed to highlight key factors that contribute to challenges women in the workforce face. Discrepancies in average pay, hours worked, and labor force participation were some of the areas highlighted. This report succeeds the [2021 Women in the Michigan Workforce Report \(PDF\)](#) with an expanded focus on education, training and regional information. To celebrate its release, MWC produced a webinar featuring Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, moderated by Chair Williams, and guest speaker Trisha Schlegel, author and economic analyst for the MCDA.

The webinar is posted to MWC's YouTube channel [Women's History Month: Women in the Michigan Workforce Report Release.](#)

March 21, 2024: GSSEM hosted the first mentorship program meet and greet event where the pairings were revealed in Detroit. Commissioners Sabala Mandava and Misti Rice were two of the ten mentors in the group. (A)

April 16, 2024: Commissioner Tamara Faber hosted MWC's second roundtable in Jackson focusing on Consumers Energy's skilled trade apprenticeship program. (*)

Aug. 26, 2024: MWC celebrated Women's Equality Day by collaborating with the Appointments Office for the Executive Office of the Governor (EOG) to produce a webinar amplifying women having a seat at the table and to apply to a commission.

The webinar is posted to MWC's YouTube channel [A seat at the table: a virtual panel discussion | Women's Equality Day](#)

Sept. 14, 2024: GSSEM and MWC concluded the mentorship program with the last in-person badge earning event: Advocacy & Leadership Day with the Honorable U.S. Congresswoman Brenda Lawrence as the keynote speaker in Farmington Hills. The Girls Scouts learned about what it means to be an active citizen and public policy. There were two panels, one about being an active citizen with Chair Townsel, Commissioner Muna

Jondy, Dawn Crandall EVP of Government Relations for the Home Builders Association of Michigan, and Amy Drumm Senior Vice President of Government Affairs for the Michigan Retailers Association moderated by Anna Rose Benson and a panel about public policy with Morgan Stephens Policy Analyst for the EOG, Emma Young Policy Analyst for the EOG, Commissioner Danielle Atkinson, and the Honorable Senator Stephanie Chang moderated by Cheryl Bergman. (A)

Sept. 18, 2024: Commissioner Kelli Saunders hosted the next roundtable at the Small Business Association of Michigan (SBAM) in Lansing. The roundtable panelists discussed small business opportunities for women and entrepreneurship. (*)

Read the Detroit Chamber article [Empowering Women Entrepreneurs: Michigan's Pathway to High-Wage Success](#)

Sept. 23-24, 2024: Bergman and Benson represented MWC at the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) Power+ Summit in Chicago. IWPR strives to win economic equity for all women and eliminate barriers to their full participation in society. The summit was a call-to-action to reimagine the future of gender equity.

Speaking Engagements

Highlights from MWC's FY24 speaking engagements include:

Nov. 8, 2023: Bergman and Lorena Disha, PhD student at Rutgers University, led a discussion about menopause in the workplace to Michigan State University's WorkLife Office in East Lansing.

Jan. 11, 2024: Bergman and Commissioner Saunders were panelists on the Women Rising: A Continuation of Advocacy and Leadership event hosted by Lisa Fisher Associates in Lansing. They had an insightful conversation about creating actionable leadership strategies.

Feb. 28, 2024: GSSEM hosted the first event in the virtual speakers' series or FNL which occurred the last Friday each month from February to September. FNLs were designed to showcase various women leaders in government to all levels of Girl Scouts. This FNL hosted guest speakers Jayshona Hicks and the Honorable Senator McDonald Rivet. (Δ)

The complete FNL series is available on GSSEM's YouTube channel

March 2, 2024: Bergman presented at the Women in Skilled Trades Summit hosted by the National Association of Women in Construction in Detroit. The topic of the presentation was on the history of women in the Michigan labor force.

March 13, 2024: Benson was a panelist for the Transitional Leadership Conference hosted by Michigan State University's Women in Business Student Association in East Lansing. The conference focused on the importance of women leaders and the value of mentorship.

March 14, 2024: Vice Chair Townsel spoke at the Women Who Advocate for Equity Diversity, and Inclusion event hosted by Canton Township, honoring Women's History Month. Townsel represented MWC and emphasized the importance of increasing women in leadership roles.

March 21, 2024: Bergman moderated a virtual Diversity Equity Inclusion Lunch and Learn hosted by the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity's (LEO) Office of Prosperity in honor of Celebrate Diversity Month.

March 21, 2024: Commissioner Rice gave opening remarks and introduced Gov. Gretchen Whitmer at the Rosie the Riveter Day Event in Lansing. This day celebrated all the women who took over male-dominated fields during World War II and single handedly saved the economy.

March 28, 2024: Bergman moderated the Women's History Month Virtual Townhall hosted by LEO and shared the mission and goals of MWC.

April 11, 2024: Bergman spoke at a SBAM briefing about the 2024 Women in the Workforce Report in Lansing.

April 22, 2024: Bergman gave a general overview of MWC to the Junior League during their advocacy day in Lansing.

May 3, 2024: Commissioner Karin Hopman represented MWC at the 2024 Spring Forum hosted by the Grand Rapids Chapter of the National Association of Women in Construction. Hopman shared that MWC is dedicated to getting more women into nontraditional careers like construction.

May 9, 2024: GSSEM hosted an FNL with guest speaker Kali Fox, the Regional Manager for the Honorable U.S. Senator Debbie Stabenow. (A)

May 11, 2024: Chair Williams was the keynote speaker at the 2024 Biennial Convention: Shaping the Future hosted by American Association of University Women in Livonia. Williams shared MWC's mission and goals and highlighted the 2024 Women in the Michigan Workforce Report.

May 14, 2024: Bergman spoke at the 2024 Building Michigan Communities Conference hosted by the Michigan State Housing Development Authority in Lansing.

May 21, 2024: Bergman was a roundtable participant on the Advancing Equity and Infrastructure Roundtable hosted by the City of Lansing in partnership with the US Department of Labor's Women's Bureau and Good Jobs Great Cities in Lansing. Bergman's roundtable focused on how to advance equity in construction and other emerging fields. (*)

May 23, 2024: Commissioner Joshua was a panelist on the Building Partnerships to Drive Equitable Registered Apprenticeships panel hosted by the Michigan Educators Apprenticeship & Training Association in Traverse City with Shannon Garrett, previous MWC staff member, as the moderator. (*)

May 23, 2024: Commissioner Atkinson collaborated with LEO to produce a webinar in observance of Mental Health Awareness Month about caregiving of children and elders with several special guests who shared their personal stories about how caregiving has touched their lives.

The webinar is posted to LEO's YouTube channel [Workplace Mental Health Webinar | Caregiving of Children and Elders.](#)

May 29, 2024: GSSEM hosted an FNL with guest speaker Maria Martinez, the Deputy Chief of Staff of the EOG and Commissioner Faber. (^)

June 7, 2024: Chair Williams spoke at the 2024 Women Leadership Summit of Chi Eta Phi Sorority in Detroit.

June 27, 2024: MWC was invited by the U.S. Chamber Foundation and the U.S. Department of Commerce to the first of its kind; the National Child Care Summit in Washington, DC. Bergman was a panelist on the Public Private Policy Case Studies panel focusing on the MI Tri-Share that MWC successfully piloted in 2021.

The Summit was recorded and posted to US Chamber of Commerce Foundation's YouTube channel; Bergman's panel starts at 6:28:42 [National Child Care Innovation Summit.](#)

July 28, 2024: Benson was invited to be a panelist for the Strength of Sisterhood Throughout Time Conference hosted by the National Association of Commissions for Women in Boston, MA. Benson was a panelist on the Girls Panel which allowed commissions to share what they were doing to engage the next generation. Benson highlighted the partnership between MWC and GSSEM and how that partnership creates unique opportunities for the next generation to learn about women leaders in government.

July 30, 2024: GSSEM hosted an FNL featuring the Honorable Senator Sarah Anthony. (A)

Aug. 13, 2024: Bergman was a panelist on the Building Human Capital panel at the inaugural Integrated Infrastructure Conference hosted by the Transport Asset Management Council in Grand Rapids.

Aug. 17, 2024: Commissioner Rice was the keynote speaker at the last GSSEM mentorship program event; the mentor luncheon in Detroit. The mentors and mentees shared their takeaways and favorite memories of the year.

Aug. 26, 2024: GSSEM hosted a FNL featuring Commissioner Saunders and Sumaiya Ahmed Sheikh, Head of Engagements of Appointments for the EOG. (A)

Sept. 30, 2024: GSSEM hosted a FNL featuring Commissioner Hopman and Teri Langley, Executive Director of the Disability Network of Michigan. (A)

In the News

[Tracy Joshua | Notable Black Leaders 2024](#)

[Bergman, Corbin: Investing in women is good for business and Michigan](#)

[RELEASE: Women In Skilled Trades Program Continues to Help Grow Diverse Workforce](#)

[Danielle Atkinson Op-ed: Give caregivers the break they deserve](#)