

Gubernatorial Candidate Responses:

1. For this State’s vulnerable citizens with disabilities Medicaid means far more than health care. Medicaid is a life-line! It provides basic supports and services (usually staff) they need each day! How would your administration assure the ongoing availability of these vital supports through Medicaid for our most vulnerable citizens?

Bill Schuette	Jim Hines	Brian Calley	Gretchen Whitmer	Bill Gelineau	Patrick Colbeck	Abdul El-Sayed
<p>Medicaid is an important resource and should be protected and strengthened. I support establishing basic, common-sense work requirements for able-bodied adults in exchange for receiving this benefit. Better yet, though, I intend to promote pro-growth policies that rebuild able-bodied people back to work would free up funding and make vital services more accessible to the people who truly need them.</p>	<p>We need to preserve Medicaid for those in need. The expansion of Medicaid in Michigan through the Healthy Michigan initiative cannot be supported if the state share of funding continues to grow. If we need to tighten the eligibility requirements to make sure that the money is available for our citizens with disabilities, that is what we must do then.</p>	<p>Social services are a life-line for many Michiganders and must remain available for our most vulnerable citizens. Still, we should strive to help people live as independent lives as possible. As we help people, we should help in ways that lead to more self-determination of their own lives.</p>	<p>I understand just how important Medicaid is to struggling families, and I am the only candidate able to say that I have successfully fought to expand the program. As Senate Democratic Leader, I led negotiations to expand Medicaid access to more than 680,000 Michiganders, and won. As Governor, I’ll take on Trump and Republicans who threaten our health coverage and protect people with pre-existing conditions, I’ll continue fighting to address the cost of healthcare and lower the cost of prescription drugs until everyone in Michigan has access to a quality affordable health plan no matter where they live or how much money they make.</p>	<p>One of the most important principles is to ensure that those able-bodied citizens become self-sufficient and not burden the limited resource of Medicaid. I will be announcing a comprehensive plan that looks very different than the Republican "kick them off" plan or the Democratic "do nothing" plan. Medicaid is a limited resource that should help those who cannot reasonably provide their own insurance.</p>	<p>By ensuring that the cost of delivering these services is sustainable. I have been recognized nationally for my health care reform efforts. My goal is to make Michigan the center of a free market healthcare revolution that expand access to quality healthcare by making it affordable for all.</p>	<p>Mega-billionaires like Trump have taken over our politics to push policies like the AHCA, which would gut Medicaid to line the pockets of the wealthy. As a doctor and public health expert, I have personally seen what happens when people can’t afford the care they need because they don’t have access to healthcare. We can and must do better. We aim to protect Medicaid expansion, and repeal work requirements in Michigan. Managing health services for a disability often requires a complex patchwork of treatments ranging from surgery and/or medication to physical therapy or support animals. However, insurers often don’t cover the full range of options and might only reimburse someone for medication and not more holistic treatment options such as physical therapy or chiropractic services, which are often medically necessary. Our statewide healthcare plan MichCare would help everyone, including those formerly on Medicaid, to get the healthcare they need when they need it. It would also end practices like caps on physical therapy visits, and simplify the billing process so interdisciplinary treatments would be covered by the same program. We must also address provider shortages: improving access to health care facilities in rural and urban areas, and increasing coverage of crucial yet difficult to access services, such as contraceptive care and mental health care. We will work to increase telehealth capabilities to provide access for Michiganders with disabilities (and especially those in rural areas) to their health care professionals. Expanded telehealth options could include counseling services and medical check-ups and potentially provide a way to connect with others who might face the same challenges. Great quality healthcare should not be a luxury in the richest nation on earth. I believe healthcare is a human right, and I will work to create and pass a single-payer healthcare program for the state of Michigan. Our campaign's policies attempt to tackle two of the biggest issues facing the disabled community in their day to day lives: accessibility and visibility. We believe in finding systemic solutions to help the people who need it: making affordable housing accessible through universal design, ending the practice of "grandfathering in" buildings that are not accessible, paying everyone a living wage, making it illegal to pay those with disabilities less than their non-disabled counterpart, and investing in programs that connect people with disabilities to quality employment.</p>

2. How would your administration work toward the goal of dramatically increasing the number of persons with disabilities in Michigan’s workforce?

Bill Schuette	Jim Hines	Brian Calley	Gretchen Whitmer	Bill Gelineau	Patrick Colbeck	Abdul El-Sayed
<p>More needs to be done to bring attention to the benefits of hiring persons with disabilities. We need to encourage employers to follow the lead of so many Fortune 500 companies that have made attention to inclusion and diversity a major goal.</p> <p>Businesses need to know there is a real return on investment in hiring persons with disabilities. When businesses start to see how hiring the untapped resource of dependable, reliable and loyal talent can impact their bottom line, change will happen. We see many inspiring examples through the outreach of the Business Leadership Network. We also see promise in how Apple, Microsoft and Ford Motor Company are utilizing the out of the box mindset of individuals with autism as a different way to approach problem solving and design. The disability community has so much to contribute – especially to our state’s economy. As Governor, I would make sure employers hear this important message.</p>	<p>I would support more programs that encourage state vendors to hire the disabled. I would explore expanding and encouraging county and municipal programs to hire the disabled. I would explore granting tax breaks to private companies to hire the disabled.</p>	<p>Employment is an identity and the opportunity to earn a paycheck is ingrained in the American way. It is the state’s obligation to eliminate barriers to employment with services tailored to what is holding people back from becoming independent. I believe that those who can work, with the right supports and services, should earn a paycheck. With employment at an all-time high, we need all able citizens to participate in Michigan’s economy. In the last 7 years, our state’s economy has added 540,000 jobs, but too many jobs are still going unfilled. Our social service system should be a springboard to employment and with the right supports and services, we can create an expectation of work for those on assistance – whether that be traditional employment or internships and community service for skill development and resume building.</p> <p>As Lt. Governor, I orchestrated a renewed push behind the Employment First Executive order. Employment First promotes competitive integrated employment as the optimal outcome for individuals with disabilities. With the help of state departments and agencies and external organizations, we were successful in securing a \$500,000 appropriation for this effort and 300 hours of technical assistance from the federal government. Our administration also included a second-year, \$500,000 appropriation in the Fiscal Year 2019 budget. This continued focus on competitive integrated employment, coupled with the expectation that all citizens should work, with the right supports and services, will help continue Michigan’s comeback.</p>	<p>Our current leaders have solely focused on lowering unemployment. Research shows that families are still struggling to afford basic necessities like housing, food, and childcare. That is why I just recently released my Better Skills, Better Jobs plan, which focuses on raising household incomes for everyone. It also supports raising the minimum wage to \$15, offers the opportunity for continued learning for adults and promotes shared prosperity. Under my administration, we will partner with nonprofits and organizations, like The Arc and Michigan Disability Rights Coalition, to pursue best practices for extending opportunities for the disabled to participate in our economy. As Governor, I will work to make sure that economic opportunities reach all communities, especially Michiganders living with disabilities and their families.</p>	<p>I’ve not developed a plan in this area. However, having been an ARC volunteer in the past AND a personal connection to persons served via Intermediate Schools, I will work with those closest to the solution to review our current programs and determine how they can be improved. As a professional manager, I’m skilled at surrounding myself with people who can provide honest assessment and we’ll approach this as an opportunity to improve the lives of citizens.</p>	<p>I would promote programs such as the Ticket to Work program.</p>	<p>Employment is a crucial vehicle not only for living an independent life, but also for a sense of belonging and identity. Unfortunately, despite having marketable skills and the desire to work, people with disabilities face significant barriers to securing meaningful employment. Only 29% of people with disabilities are employed, compared to 73.4% of those without disabilities. Moreover, for those that are able to find employment, many are paid below the minimum wage and are subject to segregated work environments.</p> <p>The El-Sayed administration stands firmly with Employment First, the principle that competitive employment in an integrated work environment is the first priority and ideal outcome for persons with disabilities. We will work to pass legislation to affirm and uphold this commitment. We will also increase access to the workforce by investing in programs similar to Project Search, in order to increase students’ exposure to hands on work experiences. Additionally, we will provide a post-high school transition program for recent grads in order to assist with full integration into the workforce.</p> <p>While the number of disabled Michiganders with steady employment is an important touchstone, gainful employment should be the largest goal. First and foremost, we will develop programs that connect people with disabilities to quality employment. Additionally, we will work to provide individualized transition services for people with disabilities entering a new workplace. While employment rises, we will sponsor legislation making it illegal for employers to pay people with disabilities less than their non-disabled counterparts. We will also invest in state vocational rehabilitation programs for people with disabilities. Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA), every \$1 of state money spent towards programs for people with disabilities is matched with \$4 of federal funds. It is crucial that we capitalize on these funds. Finally, we will develop a comprehensive employment tracking and management program. Approximately 13% of working-age Michiganders report having a disability of some kind. Despite this, our system for tracking outcomes for people with disabilities is overly broad and fails to sufficiently capture accurate data. Having more nuanced data on employment outcomes by disability type and severity will be useful for government entities and researchers to identify particular sub-groups that are underserved and develop actionable solutions that will ensure fair promotion and empowerment practices. In consultation with the Michigan Department of Education, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, the Workforce Development Agency, nonprofit organizations focusing on disability issues, and students and their families, the El-Sayed administration will identify the pertinent data points for tracking long-term education and employment outcomes.</p>

3. We have numerous reports and considerable data to indicate Michigan’s failure to keep pace in education. We have lost out on opportunities (most recently Amazon) in business. How will your administration accomplish a reinvestment in education to address our poor, and getting poorer, standing in this area? How do you propose to increase our educational standing and stop the draining of resources from our public school system?

Bill Schuette	Jim Hines	Brian Calley	Gretchen Whitmer	Bill Gelineau	Patrick Colbeck	Abdul El-Sayed
<p>Michigan spends \$15 billion annual on K-12 education -- that’s one-fourth of our state budget, dedicated to our schools. Yet, since 2003, other states have been consistently outpacing Michigan on education outcomes. Sadly, our third grade reading scores -- a critical indicator of future academic and life success – are among the lowest in the country. We are not adequately preparing our children for the life experiences ahead of them, nor are we building the talented workforce needed for a thriving Michigan economy. All of this must change. I have a plan to reverse the last 15 years of decline and set the state on a new course toward educational excellence, because whether our children aim to be career-ready or college-ready, they must be ready. I am proposing two important initiatives to improve third grade reading and vocational education. My “GROW” (Great Readers on the Way) plan will prioritize literacy with a cabinet-level literacy director, specialized reading coaches in every elementary school, individualized student support, rewards for progress, and a statewide campaign to establish a culture of literacy across Michigan. My “Paycheck Training Plan” will restore a healthy balance between</p>	<p>The first thing we need to do is make sure that every child can read by 3rd grade and that they are reading proficiently. This would require the addition of reading coaches in Pre K through 3rd grade. These coaches could be volunteers or paid for with grants or programs developed by the private sector. Individual attention is needed in the classroom at early ages since many children are not read to at home.</p>	<p>Talent is the new currency of economic development. The states and regions with the most talent will get the highest economic growth and investment. Today’s “one size fits all” approach must change. There are many different pathways to success and our education system should show kids and their parents all the options and be flexible enough to connect them to the tools they need to pursue their own dreams.</p> <p>Michigan is the top state in the Midwest for attracting young professionals for three years in a row now. However, there’s still more work to be done. I believe that every child should have an individualized education plan to better support their learning levels. Every child must be a great reader by 3rd grade in order to ensure a future of success. We must also change the way we teach kids – students should be prepared for life and not graduating just as great test takers. To meet Michigan’s workforce demand, we need to make sure that students are prepared to enter the workforce and are aware of all of their options after high school, including both college and skilled trades.</p> <p>My comprehensive education plan ensures that kids start school ready to learn, become great readers, and get prepared for life. Additionally, I am the only candidate with a plan to improve special education.</p>	<p>We have to get to work on fixing our broken school finance system. Michigan is near the bottom of the country on almost every meaningful metric, from student literacy to college preparedness. It’s an educational crisis that affects urban, rural and suburban school systems alike, and has disproportionately affected kids who are at-risk or have special needs. School finance reform must start with a recognition that certain students in certain schools need more resources to educate. That is why as Governor, I will work with the legislature to implement a weighted foundation allowance to address the extra costs of special education, English language learners and at-risk pupils. I am also committed to returning the School Aid Fund to its original constitutional purpose, K-12 education, by eliminating the \$100-plus million spent on legislator pet projects and return the \$3.5 billion School Aid Fund dollars spent on higher education to the general fund. I am also committed to phasing in quality Universal Preschool by expanding the Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP) and increasing the income threshold incrementally during my first term in office until all four-year-olds are eligible.</p>	<p>In coming weeks, I will be announcing a comprehensive plan - - Mentor Michigan - which puts resources in place to provide coordinated counseling for Mental Health, Housing, Job Placement, and Ombudsman Services. This comprehensive approach will help individuals willing to meet program goals to work out of poverty. I would break up the City of Detroit and DPS. Most of the concentrated poverty (not limited to cities, but certainly concentrated there) is not a question of money, but allocation. We need to restore community-based education in basics and a greater coordination with community-college movement into the private sector. As for Amazon....that was not an educational question. It was about tax-abatement bribery. We’re better off without them.</p>	<p>I would encourage third party investments in education through my Enhanced Michigan Education Savings Program (E-MESP). E-MESP accounts provide tax advantages that incentivize education as a lifelong endeavor. It provides the opportunity to make available over \$3,000 more per student per year through work-study programs and monetized reward programs. The work study programs in particular would not only dedicate additional funding for education, they would give students valuable work experience and employers a future employee resource pool.</p>	<p>Right now Michigan brings in negative corporate tax revenue. That is to say, we have cut our corporate tax rate so low in order to attract big corporations that we are effectively paying billions of taxpayer dollars for what is ultimately a negligible amount of permanent, good paying jobs. This is a broken system, and we must end it.</p> <p>Rather than give tax cuts to lure corporations temporarily to Michigan before those jobs are sent overseas or automated, we have to build a 21st Century economy by investing in people – particularly via a renewed commitment to technical training and apprenticeship programs – and holding moneyed interests accountable. Nothing has ever created a job as effectively or efficiently as a well educated person with a great idea and the goods and services to move themselves and their products around. In order to build a 21st century economy, we must focus on providing a strong public education system that Michiganders need to fully take advantage of burgeoning new industries.</p> <p>That education should start as early as possible, as children are their best learners the earliest in their lives. My administration would capture that potential by expanding Head Start seat availability and ensuring that all 3-4 year old Michigan children have access to Michigan’s preschool GSRP, regardless of their school district. This focus on equity and access should also be expanded to our K-12 school systems.</p> <p>To ensure that K-12 school funding is equitable I will close the proposal A per pupil per year gap in allocations between the minimum and basic provision. We have to invest in reducing the teacher/student ratio in low-income districts, given that students in these communities often need more attention - not less. We must also ensure that funding for school infrastructure and school programs is provided based on the needs of students and their teachers, not on their community’s capacity to pay. We aim to do this through the Michigan School Facilities Bank by which we can leverage unused properties to invest in properties that need updating and maintenance.</p> <p>Additionally, we must ensure that we are providing wrap-around services to those students that need them most to succeed in the classroom. These include counseling services and regular access to social workers; basic healthcare screening and support - such as eyeglasses; and healthy school meals. We must also invest in educational support professionals, such as librarians, who can engage and support students and teachers. Further, given the distinct overlap between race and class in educational achievement, I would also push to invest in training for restorative justice and culturally-responsive approaches to discipline.</p> <p>These revitalization efforts will not leave students with disability behind, and we will increase investment in special education reform</p>

<p>career and college preparation in our schools, with a focus on apprenticeships, parent- and student-led decisions, personalized instruction and regional community partnerships.</p>						<p>to affirm this commitment. Currently, only 55% of students with disabilities in Michigan graduate from high school on time. M-STEP scores illustrate that only 38% of students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) are proficient in reading at the 8th grade level, and just 18% are proficient in math. Michigan students in special education, on average, score over 200 points lower on the SAT compared to students without disabilities. I support finding a statewide funding mechanism for the roughly \$66 million it would take to fund <i>Early On</i> enough to provide basic service to every child in need. Expanding <i>Early On</i> would help every family make sure that their child with a delay or learning need is ready for school. Additionally, we are committed to provide research-based professional development opportunities for teachers, recruit skilled special education staff, and increase integration of special education students in general education classrooms.</p> <p>Fulfilling our state and our children's potential also means making the lives of individual teachers better. That is why I am committed to investing \$150 million in teachers: \$75 million to raise salaries and \$75 million to initiatives that promote teacher seniority and teacher leadership in schools. We will fund the creation of professional development programs designed and led by teachers. We will decentralize curricular development, putting teachers back in charge of their classrooms. At the district level, it means incorporating teachers into decisions about how to best assess students and teachers.</p> <p>Lastly, I will fight to build a higher education system that supports both college and vocational education. That starts with improving support for Michigan's 28 community colleges and 15 public colleges and universities and ensuring that every student from a family making less than 150k year can attend college debt free. We must also strengthen our vocational education programs for the majority of Michigan students who will not attend a 4 year college. In particular, we must make sure that our college and career curricula are aligned with the curriculums of our community college and public universities, so that students can feed directly into our higher and vocational education system. We must integrate unions into reimagining vocational apprenticeship programs to create synergistic 1- and 2-year associate's degree programs that integrate the best of in-class and on-the-job training for students. We must also ensure that both vocational and 4 year opportunities are easily accessible for Michiganders with disabilities.</p> <p>To subsidize higher education and vocational training, I will work to implement a state grant -- similar to California's Cal Grant -- that will ensure that every student whose family makes less than \$150K a year can attend Michigan's public colleges and universities for free, with heavy support for students from wealthier families as well. This grant will be available to students pursuing any type of postsecondary education, including apprenticeships and certificate programs in skilled trades. When combined with greater college and career readiness in schools, this grant will help to ensure that every child in Michigan can afford to attend and succeed in higher education.</p>
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4. We are experiencing an ever worsening crisis in attracting and keeping a competent direct support workforce. This most important job must be valued and upgraded. One of the most important issues is a competitive wage. How will your administration both make this a priority and then address the compensation for these crucial staff?

Bill Schuette	Jim Hines	Brian Calley	Gretchen Whitmer	Bill Gelineau	Patrick Colbeck	Abdul El-Sayed
<p>Direct support care workers provide an invaluable service to individuals who require long-term care and to their family members, who are able to continue to participate in the economy and receive needed respite. Competitive wages are an important aspect introducing turnover rates and the state has made some progress in addressing this situation. In addition to paying attention to wages, there are other factors that may reduce turnover. Training, credentialing, mentoring, and improving hiring practices also play a role in retention. As Governor, I would work for a comprehensive solution to the challenges in this labor market.</p>	<p>I will work with the disability community to gather ideas on how we can increase the recruitment and retention of a competent support workforce. This is a problem that is being encountered all across Michigan and it needs to be addressed.</p>	<p>Our administration worked to include a .50 cent increase for direct care workers in the Fiscal Year 2018 budget. As governor, I would work to include another appropriation to increase wages for this critical workforce. There workers care for our most vulnerable citizens. We need to be able to attract good people.</p>	<p>I understand that Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) are essential to empowering the disabled, helping them thrive in their communities and supporting their families. According to a recent Administration for Community Living Report, the average DSP struggles to earn \$10.72 an hour and works 2 and 3 jobs to make ends meet. I recognize their right to negotiate together for better wages, benefits and working conditions. I also support a \$15 minimum wage, and as governor, will work to make sure that all household incomes rise to support people with disabilities, their families, and our local communities.</p>	<p>I don't believe the government should be setting prices in the marketplace. Competitive wages are a consequence of value added by skill development.</p>	<p>The best way to promote a competitive wage is through competition.</p>	<p>Living independently must be an option for as many Michiganders as possible. I will encourage and support programs that help make that a reality, including ride-sharing options, increased training and recruitment of home health care workers, and ensuring that insurance companies cover the costs of these necessary services. However, readily available and highly trained home health care workers are the most integral part of ensuring that every Michigander obtains the highest possible quality of life, and right now these jobs are not respected as legitimate professions, nor are they paid as such.</p> <p>The structural issues behind this shortage are old, abiding and undeniably racist. Home healthcare work has historically be done predominantly by women of color. However, as this type of occupation is classified as “domestic labor”, it has been precluded from unionization. As recently as 2014 Governor Snyder signed a bill into law that prevented an SEIU bargaining contract that would have protected 44,000 home health care workers under the pretense that these employees were “family members”, not paid staff.</p> <p>In order to attract more Michiganders to the home healthcare profession, we must dignify home healthcare workers as the professionals that they are. We must guarantee a living wage by raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour and ensuring that home healthcare workers are able to unionize to demand the benefits that come along with a respected profession like all other healthcare related jobs. Empowering unions like the SEIU to organize these industries is the best way to ensure that Michiganders with disabilities do not lack access to the services that homecare professionals offer. This necessitates a full repeal of Right to Work legislation, which I intend to pursue on my first days in office.</p> <p>Lastly, we will increase funding for DHS Adult Service Home Help Program to provide adequate funding for direct support professionals and family caregivers, as well as access to comprehensive healthcare benefits and the training needed to assure quality care.</p>