



SOCIAL POLICY POSITIONS

1. Children and Youth: Pages 1-2
2. Public Education (Pre K-12) in Michigan: Pages 3-8
3. Health Care: Pages 9-10
4. Social Services System: Page 11
5. Structure and Funding of Michigan's Public Libraries: Pages 12-14
6. The Agricultural Migrant/Seasonal Worker: Pages 15-16
7. Prisons in Michigan: Pages 17-18
8. Criminal Justice: Pages 19-21
9. Medical Aid in Dying: Page 22

CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Position adopted 1965; revised 1977, 1989, 1997, 2017. DEI review 2023.

- I. LWVMI supports a system of comprehensive and coordinated services for all children and families in order to provide basic resources for an adequate quality of life. These basic resources are nurturance, access to health care and sufficient income to assure decent standards of food, clothing and shelter.

LWVMI supports policies and programs to provide preventive, protective and rehabilitative services for all children and their families. Such programs should be sustainably funded and sufficiently staffed by well-trained personnel. These programs include, but are not limited to:

- A. Childcare-flexible and varied licensed programs including before and after school care;
- B. Medical and dental services including prenatal services;
- C. Family counseling;
- D. Homemaker service;
- E. Mental health facilities for diagnosis and treatment;
- F. Protective services on a statewide basis;
- G. Family preservation services;
- H. Foster care facilities to provide group and family care for long and short-term placement;

- I. Provision for shelter care for non-court situations;
- J. Head Start; and
- K. Parental leave.

II. Juvenile Justice

LWVMI supports the concept of "individualized justice" for children within the framework of due process of law, adequate and coordinated court services, and unification of qualified staff for Michigan courts that deal with children. Children sometimes commit status or adult offenses but the justice system must recognize that they are still children.

A. Rights

- 1. Judgments and dispositions of the juvenile court should be based upon a careful study and evaluation of the needs of children brought before it, within the framework of their family, and consistent with proper protection of the larger society.
- 2. Children before the juvenile court should be assured the same safeguards of due process of law accorded to adults in adult court.
- 3. Juvenile court should adhere to uniform procedural rules which safeguard due process of law.
- 4. Detention should be used only for those who are a danger to themselves or the community.

B. Services

- 1. Adequate but separate care for delinquent and neglected children under court jurisdiction.
- 2. Improved and expanded probation services for those under the jurisdiction of the juvenile court.
- 3. Improved and expanded services to prevent juvenile delinquency and to augment measures to rehabilitate delinquents.
- 4. Provision of services where lacking and organization to eliminate duplication between courts.
- 5. Services for children and juveniles should be separate from adult services.

C. Personnel

- 1. All court personnel should meet minimum standards and receive in-service training and adequate compensation.
- 2. Establishment of one system of employment for juvenile court personnel.
 - a. The judge should participate in the system of employment to ensure a compatible staff.
 - b. The employment system should provide adequate protection for the rights of personnel.



SOCIAL POLICY POSITIONS

PUBLIC EDUCATION (Pre-K-12) IN MICHIGAN

Structure, Financing, and Goals Position adopted 1969, 1970, 1972; Section A.1.C. added 1993; LWVUS position on Equality of Opportunity adopted 1969, revised 1989; portions of the LWVUS positions on The Role of the Federal Government in Education (2012) and Privatization of Government Services (2012) are also relevant. Public School Academies adopted 2001. Teacher Certification in Michigan adopted 1984. Positions Updated and Compiled 2014. DEI review 2023.

LWVMI supports:

1. The development of a publicly financed public education system in which there is equitable opportunity for an excellent education available to all children in Michigan.
2. An educational structure that provides transparency and accountability at all levels and in all venues.

I. Structure

A. Traditional Public Schools

The educational structure should provide that

1. There be a State Board of Education.
2. All local districts offer a pre-K program for all 4 year olds. Participation in this program should not be mandatory.
3. Regional Educational Service Agencies (RESAs) and Intermediate Districts (ISDs) offer effective services.
4. Educational programs be available to all persons who wish to complete their high school education.
5. The primary factor in annexation and consolidation decisions is improving the educational potential of the affected districts. Local officials and staff must be involved in these decisions and the resulting arrangements should not lead to a reduction in educational quality for the students in any of the participating districts.

B. Charter Schools

1. The LWVMI supports the concept of educational choices for parents and students within the public school system. Choices should include input from parents, students, educators, and the public. Charter schools, public school academies, and school districts created through inter local agreements may be some of the publicly funded choices available to parents and students, (For convenience the term charter schools will be used throughout Section B for all of the above options.)

2. There should be a moratorium on new charter schools until the State of Michigan can provide adequate oversight. Public funds should not be distributed to establish and/or fund new charter schools until existing charter schools can be shown to be consistently effective. There should be a cumulative assessment as to whether or not children are benefitting.
3. Qualified staff at the authorizing institutions must provide well developed oversight of charter schools. Oversight must include evaluation of curriculum, compliance with legal requirements, and financial management that follows accepted government auditing standards.
 - a. Academic: Curriculum that follows core curriculum standards, promotes educational achievement of students, and enables students to maintain academic progress if transfer to another school becomes necessary.
 - b. Legal: Compliance with all laws including completion of contract requirements with authorizing institutions, selection of governing boards, conflicts of interest, competitive contracts, and services to special needs students.
 - c. Financial: Managing, auditing, and reporting financial performance according to generally accepted accounting standards and government auditing standards, as do other public schools.
4. The State Board of Education should ensure that authorizing institutions are performing their oversight and accountability functions. Charter schools and authorizing institutions must provide required data to the State Board in a timely fashion. In turn, the State Board must promptly provide such information to the public. Charter schools and their governing boards must provide parents, students and the public with assurance and evidence of adequate supervision of the school.
5. All charter schools must comply with state laws to ensure that student selection by mental or physical disability, athletic ability, economic status, race, ethnic origin, religion, gender, gender expression, or level of parental involvement is not practiced in fact or by innuendo or pressure.
6. Effective procedures should be developed to identify, evaluate, replicate, and disseminate innovations that may be tested or practiced by charter schools, provided such development does not divert students from the task of learning.
7. Although the law requires that a state standardized test be administered, this is not sufficient. Additional criteria are needed, particularly for K-3. All public schools, including charter schools, should use testing programs based on the same standards. Evaluation should include whether or not charter schools are meeting their mission statements and goals as reflected in their authorizing contracts.
8. Authorizing institutions must provide diligent oversight of management companies which provide educational services.
 - a. Publicly funded schools and educational institutions operated by management companies must comply with legal safeguards preventing the exclusion of board, parent, public official and staff input by such companies.
 - b. Oversight must include ethical matters, conflicts of interest, the appearance of conflicts of interest, and the management and expenditures of public monies.
 - c. Student achievement should be the focus of management companies, not profit. The goal of site-based decision-making should be preserved when a management company controls the school.

- d. The costs of management company services should be compared with costs in other public schools, and must not exceed an acceptable percent for administration, fees, and profit. Information regarding management service expenditures must be available to the public.

C. Schools of Choice

1. The LWVMI recognizes that permitting a student in one local district to attend a traditional school in another district is also an option for parents and students.
2. All arrangements should be subject to the basic requirements of accessibility, accountability, and transparency. The costs and benefits for the participating students, as well as for the sending and receiving schools, should be thoroughly evaluated and the results made readily available to the public.

D. Post-secondary Education for High School Students

1. The LWVMI supports cooperation between community colleges (and other post-secondary publicly funded schools) and local schools, school districts, RESAs and ISDs to provide educational opportunities, including but not limited to, advanced courses, early transition into college, or assistance with underperforming students.
2. The responsibility for the student's progress should be clearly defined.
3. Every student should have access to support services either at the college or the school district of origin.
4. All arrangements should be subject to the basic requirements of accessibility, accountability, and transparency.

E. New Forms of Instruction - Technology

1. The LWVMI supports the use of innovative forms of technology for preK-12 instruction. The availability of online, distance learning, computer assisted programs and mobile information networking in all grades, classrooms and schools should be a goal at the state and local levels.
2. The State and local districts should move swiftly and with the best knowledge available to adjust and equalize funding for all students to benefit from digital learning.
3. The State and school districts should provide high standards for staff development and require appropriate certification of teachers to ensure the benefit of the technology investment and the self-renewal of the teaching profession.
4. All programs should be thoroughly evaluated to ensure that they are truly beneficial to the educational process and the results should be made available to the public.

II. Financing

- A. State, federal and local governments should share the responsibility for fully financing education in both basic foundation and categorical programs.
- B. State income tax, state and local property taxes and state sales tax should all be used as sources of revenue. Public funds should not be used for nonpublic education except for shared time in the public schools, auxiliary services and transportation.
- C. The State should:
 1. Bear the greatest primary responsibility for fully financing PreK-12 education.
 2. Provide a financially accountable and transparent distribution system which ensures

equitable educational opportunity for all children.

3. Organize an effective and efficient administrative structure.

4. Provide additional support to schools in disadvantaged districts.

5. Provide funding and intervention support services in a timely manner to reduce the risk of school financial failure.

D. Local districts should:

1. Continue to bear some additional responsibility for financing education with the option of raising additional revenue.

2. Retain the major control in the spending of the educational dollar under state guidelines.

3. Publish budgets which clearly indicate all sources of revenue and all programs and services for which the funds are spent.

E. The financial distribution system should:

1. Ensure equitable educational opportunity to all children.

2. Be funded at a level aimed at achieving an excellent program for all school children.

3. Exclude the use of any voucher system.

4. Require the same standards of fiscal responsibility and transparency of all educational entities receiving public funds.

5. Ensure that contracts involving the use of public school funds made with outside entities, whether for profit or nonprofit, follow guidelines such as those supported by the LWVUS in its position on Privatization of Government Services.

III. Goals

Goals should be established for the educational system.

A. There should be statewide goals, goals for the intermediate districts (Regional Educational Service Agencies (RESAs) and Intermediate School Districts (ISDs) and goals for the local school districts.

B. The goals should include, but not be limited to, the full implementation of the Common Core State Standards (or similarly developed standards) from which the State and school districts should develop teaching curriculum and assessment.

D. The State should provide support to school districts and teachers to achieve full implementation of these standards.

E. Achievement should be addressed in reference to these goals, taking local factors into consideration in the analysis of assessment results.

F. Flexible responses, including support services, are needed when assessment has disclosed that goals are not being met.

G. Locally elected school officials and staff should be involved in determining remedial actions for schools which fail to meet their goals.

H. The state should provide funding and intervention support services in a timely manner to prevent a school's failure to meet its academic goals.

IV. Certification of Instructors and Administrators

A. Teacher Preparation and Professional Development

1. The State of Michigan should:

a. Have responsibility for a system of professional development for educators.

b. Develop a standard for approval of teacher education programs in Michigan

institutions of higher education.

c. Periodically review and evaluate the curricula in Michigan institutions of teacher education.

2. The professional development staffs of the Michigan Department of Education, the intermediate districts (RESAs and ISDs) and local school districts, the institutions of higher education, the professional associations, and educators themselves should have a role in the professional development of educators.
3. An educator's professional development should be a dynamic, continuing career-long process subject to periodic review for maintaining valid certification.
4. The state system of review of teacher education programs and a state system of certification of educators should be complementary parts of a state system of professional development of educators.

B. Certification of Educators

1. The State of Michigan should develop standards for initial and continuing certification of educators.
2. Initial certification should require a demonstrated ability to meet an established standard for pedagogical skills, mastery of subject area and knowledge of the developmental learning stages of children and youth. Continuing certification should require a demonstration of continued ability to meet standards established by the state.
3. The State Board of Education, the Michigan Department of Education, Michigan institutions for teacher education and the professional associations, with input from local school boards and concerned citizens, should have a role in establishing the standards for certification.
4. The State of Michigan should comply with all 'Highly Qualified' or similar requirements established under federal law.
5. The State should provide for certification of educators of pre-kindergarten through 12th grade students
6. The State of Michigan should have the authority to establish rules and regulations regarding the certification of teachers
7. The certification system should include a separate middle school/junior high school certification level.
8. Certification endorsements should be available and required for all subjects taught in middle school through high school.
9. Certification endorsements should be related to developmental growth levels.
10. State certifications should require a pre-kindergarten endorsement for educators with pre-kindergarten educational responsibilities.
11. State certification should restrict assignment of middle school through high school educators to areas of major/minor endorsement.
12. State certification of educators delivering instruction to students should be consistent in all venues. These venues include, but are not limited to, traditional public schools, charter schools, online charter schools, dual enrollment programs, virtual labs, alternative education programs, and distance learning. Educators teaching college classes may be exempt from this requirement.
13. Alternative certification paths may be developed by the state of Michigan for teachers of certain career technical classes.

C. Certification of Administrators

1. The State of Michigan should establish specific administrative certification and

endorsement requirements for those persons administering programs and evaluating certified staff.

2. Administrative certification should be consistent in all venues. These venues include, but are not limited to, traditional public schools, charter schools, online charter schools, dual enrollment programs, virtual labs, alternative education programs and distance learning.

V. Statewide Teacher Evaluation

A. The LWVMI supports a statewide teacher evaluation plan based on established observation tools.

B. No more than one half, preferably less, of a teacher's evaluation should be based on student assessment.



SOCIAL POLICY POSITIONS

HEALTH CARE

Position adopted 1985, revised 1997, 2007. DEI Review 2023.

LWVMI supports:

A basic level of quality health care that is affordable and available to all Michigan residents.

This basic level includes access to preventive care; health promotion and education, including access to cost information; primary care, including prenatal and reproductive health services; acute care; long term care; affordable prescription drugs; palliative care and hospice services; and mental health care coverage and services, including substance use disorder services, up to parity with other health care services.

Cost effective methods that do not sacrifice necessary care for the individual. Efficient and economical delivery of care, enhanced by such practices as reduction of administrative costs, increased use of medical technology, and regional planning for the allocation of personnel, facilities and equipment.

I. Facilities

- A. The availability of health care facilities in a given community should be reviewed to avoid duplication of equipment and facilities that are scarcely used and expensive. Certificates of Need and discretionary bed use programs, important methods of encouraging efficient operations, should be reviewed by a committee that include providers and consumers to ensure that the existing facilities are congruent with community needs.

The Certificate of Need process should continue and include:

- 1. Periodic review of the dollar amount thresholds of projects to be reviewed,
- 2. Streamlining the process and strengthening it through stricter enforcement,
- 3. Limiting the process to new or additional medical treatment facilities and equipment and major renovations.

- B. To ensure that the most cost efficient and least restrictive health care systems are utilized, a full range of health care options should be available including: hospitals, nursing homes, home care, minor emergency centers, ambulatory care, out-patient surgery, adult day care, inpatient and outpatient mental health and substance use disorder care, and hospice programs.

II. Health Care Personnel

- A. Use of various types of providers such as advanced nurse practitioners,

physician assistants, or other certified health professionals should be encouraged where appropriate.

- B. Workforce development: The training and support of an adequate number of service providers is necessary to address health care workforce shortages, including the development of sufficient teaching faculty, in order to improve patient safety and the health care delivery environment. Training of healthcare personnel to include education on implicit bias and cultural awareness in the care of healthcare consumers.
- C. Providers of services share the responsibility for controlling health care costs with consumers. The cost/risk/benefit relationship should be considered when prescribing medications, laboratory testing or protracted treatments, with the patient involved in the decision-making process.

III. Health Care Consumers

- A. Consumers should be viewed as full members of the health care team.
- B. Consumers should assume responsibility for healthful living practices both as a means to protect their own quality of life and to decrease or eliminate excessive health care costs.
- C. As active partners in the process of care, consumers must be encouraged to express their preference for end-of-life care, and assign a patient advocate and/or assert their desires in writing as provided for in Michigan law.

IV. Patient Safety

- A. Health care professionals have a responsibility to provide competent care. Providers and consumers both have an obligation to support systems that will reduce medical errors, malpractice or professional liability lawsuits.
- B. Consumers should have the opportunity to redress grievances, including those involving pharmaceutical companies, but should act responsibly in considering malpractice or professional liability lawsuits.
- C. The state has the responsibility to establish a resource for the reporting of medical errors and the dissemination of this information in order to reduce patient harm across health care settings.

V. Access

- A. Access to a basic level of care should not be based on ability to pay. Public funding should be provided to eliminate the financial barriers which prevent access to care and coverage for many residents of all ages.
- B. Adequate medical care, service providers, facilities and transportation should be provided in geographical areas defined as underserved.



SOCIAL POLICY POSITIONS

SOCIAL SERVICES SYSTEM

Position adopted 1965 with additions in 1966, revised in 1969, National Income Assistance position adopted 1971. DEI review 2023.

LWVMI supports a system of social services to:

- 1) Provide sufficient income assistance to assure decent, adequate standards for food, clothing and shelter for those persons unable to work, or for whom jobs are not available, or whose earnings are inadequate; and
 - 2) Establish adequate financial incentives and opportunities for realistic job training and counseling.
- I. The federal government should bear the major responsibility for:
 - A. Financing basic programs of income assistance,
 - B. Setting income and eligibility standards, and
 - C. Supervising the administration of assistance.

However, the administrative office should be at the local level. All administrative procedures should be conducted with respect for the rights and dignity of the individual.

- II. Eligibility should be on the basis of need of all low-income individuals and established through simplified procedures.
- III. Supportive services should be available to the total community and voluntary in nature. Fees should be based on ability to pay. Participants representing DEI principles should be involved in program development and implementations to assure needs are met. Most important among services to help people work toward self-sufficiency are child care, counseling, family planning, health and legal services.



SOCIAL POLICY POSITIONS

STRUCTURE AND FUNDING OF MICHIGAN'S PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Position adopted 1988, revised 1997, 2023, DEI review 2023.

- I. A basic level of public library funding should insure basic services to all residents in Michigan. Basic services include:
 - A. Public libraries open a minimum of twenty (20) hours per week, staffed by a professional librarian;
 - B. A public library collection of books for all ages, periodicals and appropriate indexes, reference collection and audio visual materials;
 - C. A catalog, either card or electronic, of items owned by the library;
 - D. Interloan borrowing from other libraries; and
 - E. Programs for children and access to library materials and services for people with disabilities.
- II. The organization of Michigan's public libraries should be uniform. Legislation should strive for uniformity in the following areas:
 - A. Powers of the local library board;
 - B. Minimum/maximum number of library board trustees;
 - C. Development of a long-range plan;
 - D. Development of policies and procedures; and
 - E. Required filing of documentation with the Library of Michigan.
- III. Library boards should be self-governing with financial autonomy/discretion, whether funding is through direct millage or appropriation. Boards should be empowered to place a bond issue and/or operating millage before the electors.
- IV. Recognized appropriate stable funding sources are local tax funds, state aid and penal fines.
- V. To be eligible for statewide per capita distribution of library funds (state aid, penal fines or any other), public libraries should be required to comply with basic/minimum standards.

- VI. The Detroit Public Library should continue to receive special state funding as a major resource library, available to all residents of the state.
- VII. Rural libraries, which serve a population of 25,000 or less, should receive special funding to improve local resources and to enable them to better meet basic standards of service.
- VIII. Penal fines are identified in the Michigan Constitution as an exclusive revenue source for public libraries. The state Legislature should not permit other state agencies access to portions of penal fines. There should be a centralized statewide distribution of penal fines with a uniformly applied formula.
- IX. The Library of Michigan, as the state library agency, has roles defined by law. Additional roles should include:
 - A. Disbursement and oversight of federal and state monies identified for public libraries;
 - B. Technical assistance to carry out cooperative programs throughout the state;
 - C. Development and encouragement of cooperative arrangements for maximum access to information across the state, including such things as a statewide database;
 - D. Consultation services to all sectors of the library community; and
 - E. Development of a statewide plan to improve interlibrary loan service by offsetting costs.
- X. The State of Michigan has a responsibility for funding statewide library services. Public Act 89 of 1977 provides state aid support for both public libraries and public library cooperatives. The state Legislature should fully fund the maximum permitted by the present law (50 cents per capita), as well as fund adjusted maximum cost of living increases experienced since 1977.
- XI. Statewide cooperative efforts among libraries should include:
 - A. Shared resources, such as: a database of materials owned by Michigan's libraries; interlibrary loan; development of union lists; reference information and referral services;
 - B. Improved communications and delivery systems, such as: telefacsimile (fax); WATS line; access to national databases; commercial and/or U.S. Postal Service; and future technological developments;
 - C. Conservation/preservation of rare materials;
 - D. Continuing education and training; and
 - E. Consultation services.
- XII. Within a public library cooperative, member libraries may benefit from shared activities, such as:
 - A. Cooperative or joint purchasing of such items as books, equipment and supplies;
 - B. A materials examination center to facilitate centralized ordering;

- C. Technical services including cataloging and creation of a database of materials owned by member libraries;
 - D. Resources development and sharing including: collection development, interlibrary loan, reference and referral services;
 - E. Improved communications and delivery systems including: telefacsimile (fax); WATS line; U.S. Postal Service; and vehicle on a regular basis;
 - F. Storage/warehousing;
 - G. Continuing education and training; and
 - H. Consultation services.
- XIII. Public libraries should cooperate with other types of libraries (school, academic, corporate, medical) in their communities. Cooperation should include: information exchange, interlibrary loan, and shared computerized access.
- XIV. Federal monies are an appropriate source of revenue for networking projects.
- XV. Potential sources of appropriate stable funding for public library services should be explored. One example would be using the state income tax as a source of revenue.
- XVI. The League supports full service public library systems.
- A. Public libraries should support our First Amendment right to intellectual freedom and expression by playing an important role in facilitating free and open access to information.
 - B. Individuals should be trusted to make their own decisions about what they read and believe. Removing and banning books from public libraries is a slippery slope to governmental censorship and the erosion of our country's commitment to freedom of expression.
 - C. Library staff, operating within the standards of the American Library Association, should make professional decisions about selection, organization, preservation, and dissemination of resources, services and technologies without political interference.



SOCIAL POLICY POSITIONS

THE AGRICULTURAL MIGRANT/SEASONAL WORKER

Position adopted, 2015, revised 2018. DEI review 2023.

State and local governments should pass legislation and publicly fund programs and services that address the ongoing challenges faced by agricultural employers to recruit and retain viable, skilled migrant/seasonal farm workers. It is quality of life issues for workers and their families that draw workers in a competitive labor market. Quality of life is enhanced by safe, healthy, affordable housing; education; health care; fair treatment by law enforcement and other services provided by state and local government offices and agencies.

- I. Local and State Law Enforcement
 - A. Should minimize language barriers and overcome distrust between law enforcement and the migrant/seasonal agricultural worker community by having reliable interpretation services readily available; by securing cultural awareness training for all department employees; by developing avenues to broaden communication; and by providing legal rights information to the migrant/seasonal agricultural worker community
 - B. Should allow a person to apply for, secure and renew a driver's license or obtain an identification card regardless of immigration status.
- II. Public Education
 - A. Local School Districts
 - 1. Should provide a quality education and support for the children and parents in migrant/ seasonal agricultural worker families.
 - 2. Should offer English as a Second Language (ESL) for children and parents, including evening classes.
 - 3. Should offer social programs to integrate students and migrant/ seasonal families into the school community.
- III. Health Care
 - A. Publicly funded health care services should provide day and evening hours of service, on-site interpreters and access to mental health and substance abuse services without requiring documentation as criteria for care.
 - B. The migrant/seasonal agricultural worker community should be made aware of

services available and how to access those services.

IV. Housing Quantity and Quality

A. Township and County Planning and Zoning Ordinances

1. Should allow agricultural labor housing year round or for three- season occupancy.
2. Should reflect consistency among township planning commissions and zoning boards to allow a streamlined permit and building process in support of quality agricultural labor housing.

B. County Governments

1. Should adopt and administer government public funding programs in support of repair and refurbishment of unlicensed agricultural labor housing.
2. Should appoint a bilingual facilitator to handle complaints to the Board of Health and Construction Code Department.
3. Should give priority to regular and timely oversight, inspection, and enforcement of health and construction standards for all area unlicensed agricultural labor rental housing.

C. State Government

1. Should increase public funding for building new or refurbishing existing agricultural labor housing.
2. Should eliminate agricultural labor housing permit and licensing conflicts between state agencies such as the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) and the Michigan Occupational Safety and Health Administration (MIOSHA)
3. Should expand licensing for and require inspections of agricultural labor housing with four or fewer migrant//seasonal workers.

V. County Boards, Commissions, Committees, Authorities and Non-Governmental and Not-for-Profit Agencies which receive county funds

- A. Should work cooperatively with local governmental units and organizations to address the needs of agricultural employers and the migrant/seasonal agricultural worker community.
- B. Should provide publications for the public in both English and Spanish for distribution to agricultural employers to be given to their migrant/seasonal workers.
- C. Should have reliable interpretation services readily available.



SOCIAL POLICY POSITIONS

PRISONS IN MICHIGAN

Position adopted 1991, Revised 1997, Restudied & Revised 2010. DEI review 2023.

The LWVMI believes that the state's criminal justice* system should utilize, as appropriate, the following principles:

- Restorative justice that emphasizes repairing the harm caused by criminal behavior.
- Therapeutic justice that addresses the offender's behavior as a problem requiring non-traditional sanctions and/or social services in addition to traditional sanctions.
- Retributive justice that punishes those who break the rules.

The LWVMI supports the following:

- I. The use of alternatives to incarceration in the following circumstances:
 - A. For individuals who can be safely managed in the community.
 - B. For persons with mental illness who have committed crimes.
 - C. For juveniles, in order to end the practice of incarcerating juveniles in adult facilities.
- II. State funding of all of the costs of an indigent person's defense.
- III. Preservation of an incarcerated person's right to the following:
 - A. Access to the courts.
 - B. Protection under the Michigan Civil Rights Act.
 - C. Access to the Freedom of Information Act for requests that do not compromise public safety.
 - D. Access to the vote following incarceration.
- IV. Oversight of the prison system that includes the following:
 - A. An ombudsman.
 - B. Media access to prisons.
 - C. Policies that encourage visitation.
 - D. Careful oversight of privatized services with penalties for nonperformance.
- V. The prison system's responsibility for ensuring the following:
 - A. Humane conditions in the state's prisons.
 - B. Mental health services that meet community standards.

- C. Health care that meets community standards.
 - D. Rehabilitative programming that is available on a timely basis.
 - E. Provision of assistance to incarcerated individuals in transitioning back into the community.
- VI. The parole board's responsibility for the following:
- A. The use of objective rationale for holding someone past his or her minimum sentence.
 - B. Ensuring that all individuals are released early enough to provide some transitional supervision.
- VII. The LWVMI supports the Michigan constitutional prohibition on enactment of the death penalty.

**Please note that this position applies to the Michigan criminal justice system and cannot be applied to County jails.*



SOCIAL POLICY POSITIONS

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Position adopted 2021. DEI review 2023.

Position in Brief:

The LWV Michigan supports:

- a criminal justice system that is just, effective, equitable, transparent, and that fosters public trust at all stages, including policing practices, pre-trial procedures, sentencing, incarceration, and re-entry;
- the elimination of systemic bias, including the disproportionate policing and incarceration of marginalized communities;
- policing practices that promote safety for both law enforcement officers and the communities they serve;
- collaboration between government and community throughout every stage of the criminal justice system;
- a focus on humane treatment and rehabilitation with the goal of promoting the successful reentry into communities of those who have been incarcerated; and
- reliance on evidence-based research in decision-making about law-enforcement programs and policies (including scheduled, periodic audits of program and policy effectiveness)

Details:

Policing Practices - constitutional policies and procedures established by law enforcement with input from the communities they serve

- Ensure that crime prevention and promotion of public safety are the primary roles of state and local law enforcement agencies.
- Build public trust and positive community relationships through police engagement with community members.
- Encourage community participation in the development of policing policy.
- Provide police accountability via independent citizen oversight of law enforcement and publicly available data on officer conduct.

- Disseminate information to the public about policing policies, recruitment, procedures for complaint/commendation, and the rights and responsibilities of citizens and officers in interactions with each other.
- Provide sufficient psychological services and counseling to meet stress-related needs of police personnel.
- Staff police departments to reflect the diversity of the communities they serve, and establish recruitment efforts that reflect this principle.
- Train police to identify individuals with mental health conditions, disabilities, or substance use disorders, so that officers will request support from appropriate medical and mental health professionals, with the goal of diverting those individuals into treatment instead of jail.
- Require all officers to render first aid to people who have been injured as a result of police action.
- Conduct comprehensive background checks, to include such history as PTSD, domestic violence, sex offenses and affiliations with domestic terrorist groups, for all applicants to law enforcement positions.
- Establish de-escalation (the use of time, distance, communications and available resources whenever it is safe to do so) and anti-bias training, and ensure that all staff are provided with this training.
- Authorize minimal use of force during police encounters with the public, and consider deadly force only when necessary to prevent imminent death or serious bodily injury.

Pre-trial Procedures - actions taken after an individual has been arrested, which embody the constitutional presumption of innocence

- Ensure no person suffers discrimination before the law due to their economic status nor should they be subject to risk assessment tools which can produce biased outcomes.
- Provide adequate numbers of public defenders to defend indigent accused.
- Provide prosecutors, defense attorneys, court counselors and judges with regular training on alternatives to incarceration, including pre-trial diversion and restorative justice practices.
- Recognize that mental health conditions and substance use disorders are public health issues, not crimes.
- Implement the use of specialty courts, e.g. drug treatment courts and restorative justice programs.
- Consider community-based treatment programs and other alternatives to incarceration when appropriate.

Sentencing - judgment made after an individual has been declared to be guilty

- Consider the individual circumstances of the person charged and nature of the crime, rather than mandatory minimum sentences.
- Consider split sentencing and/or alternatives to incarceration when appropriate.

Incarceration - policies and procedures that apply to employees of and incarcerated individuals in local jails and state prisons

- Ensure that all correctional systems provide humane, dignified, non-discriminatory treatment of incarcerated people and personnel, including appropriate healthcare and access to community-based rehabilitation programs.
- Eliminate the practice of solitary confinement.
- Ensure that incarcerated people and corrections officers have clear, safe and accessible ways to report abuse.
- Address recidivism by instituting programs that focus on rehabilitation, education, mental health and substance use disorder treatment, and transitional programs.
- Adapt case management services to match education, behavior, job training, work, and mental health programs with the needs of incarcerated individuals.
- Provide sufficient psychological services, including training and evaluation, to meet the needs of corrections officers.
- Encourage family and community visitations and ways to maintain contact.
- Eliminate private prisons. Until space in public prisons is available, ensure that private prisons comply with all of the standards for state-run jails and prisons.

Re-entry - programs in place during and after incarceration to help individuals become successful members of their communities

- Collaborate with community-based organizations to facilitate reintegration of people released from prison.
- Provide pre- and post-release programs, inclusive of probation services, to prepare as well as assess and address the needs of people re-entering the community.
- Remove technical violations of parole as a reason to return an individual to prison.

General - statements which apply to some or all of the above categories

- Standardize data and setting up systems so that information can be easily shared among criminal justice agencies.
- Rely on evidence-based research in decision making about criminal justice programs and policies.



MEDICAL AID IN DYING

Adopted 2025

The League of Women Voters of Michigan believes that state laws should grant the option for a terminally ill person to request medical assistance from a relevant, licensed physician to end one's life.

The League of Women Voters of Michigan believes such legislation should include safeguards against abuse for the dying and/or medical personnel.