



# Governor Whitmer's 2022 State of the State Address as Prepared for Delivery

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**REDFORD, Mich.** -- Governor Gretchen Whitmer today will deliver her 2022 State of the State Address. Please see below for her remarks as prepared for delivery.

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Good evening, Michigan. Today is our state's 185th birthday. To celebrate, we're at Detroit Diesel, built in 1938 to help us win World War II. A lifetime later, it's home to cutting-edge electric vehicle technology built by the hardworking men and women of UAW Local 163. Places like this are where Michigan's future will be forged, and I am thrilled to be here to deliver my State of the State address.

But before we begin, let's take a moment to honor those who are not with us. Let's remember the 4 young Michiganders we lost in Oxford-Madisyn, Tate, Hana, Justin. And

those living with lifelong injuries and carrying the weight from that horrific day. The Oxford community is in all of our hearts. Michiganders, if you want to help, please go to [oxfordcommunityvictimsfund.com](https://oxfordcommunityvictimsfund.com)

Let's also remember the over 30,000 Michiganders we've lost to COVID-19 and thank the first responders, healthcare professionals, and Michigan National Guard for everything they do to keep us safe.

Michigan's National Guard is the best in the country. They go above and beyond-at home and oceans away. Recently, I had the honor of pinning Purple Hearts onto 3 guard members who were injured during a ballistic missile attack in Iraq. Michiganders salute their sacrifices. They represent the best of us.

I also want to acknowledge my partner in governance-Lieutenant Governor Garlin Gilchrist. He is an innovative, optimistic champion for Michigan. I am so glad to have him by my side.

And finally, I want to thank my husband, my girls, my family, and friends. I love you.

Clearly, this year's speech is different. Due to COVID, we are not in the capitol. Right now, healthcare professionals are working hard to keep us safe as Omicron surges. While 2021 wasn't as miraculous as any of us wanted, we have made progress. We're stronger in large part thanks to science and life-saving vaccines. We have come a long way, and I am encouraged about the path ahead.

After a polar vortex, pandemic, national recession, multiple 500-year flooding events, a kidnapping and murder plot, I've been asked-how the heck do I keep doing this?

My answer is simple. I show up for every Michigan family. I want to keep delivering on the kitchen-table issues. On a personal level: I want my girls to see their mom stand her ground and live her values even through unexpected challenges and constant threats.

Isn't that what we all want?-to make a difference for the people we love most? And the truth is, we want the same things.

A good-paying job.

Great schools.

Clean water.

Safe communities.

Thriving small businesses.

A chance to get ahead and hope for the future.

Tonight, I will stay focused on the things that unite us. I'll speak to the progress we've made together, the opportunity we have right now, and why we all believe in Michigan.

The state of our state is strong... and it's getting stronger every day.

First, let's talk about the roads. The pandemic slowed us down a bit, but since I took office, Michigan has repaired, rebuilt, or rehabilitated over 13,000 lane miles of road and over 900 bridges in every region of our state while supporting nearly 82,000 jobs. That's enough miles to drive from the Michigan-Ohio border to the Mighty Mac over 40 times.

In 2021 alone, we fixed Gratiot in Macomb; I-496 in Lansing; 196 in Allegan; 69 in Genesee; 94 in Kalamazoo; US-41 in Marquette; and we're forging ahead on the Gordie Howe Bridge in Detroit, which will be taller than the Statue of Liberty when it's completed.

Recently, the Army Corps of Engineers answered our call to invest in the Soo Locks, securing funding to finish the job in Sault St. Marie. That's a big deal for the UP and our state's economy.

Last year, I reinstated prevailing wage for state construction contracts. That means we will get the best-trained workforce and the best value for our tax dollars.

Our task on infrastructure-from roads to lead pipes to high-speed internet-is large... due to decades of neglect and underfunding. That's why we're fixing our roads and bridges with the right mix and materials, so they stay fixed. And we're creating good-paying, skilled trades jobs along the way-the kind you can raise a family on, with solid benefits and a secure retirement.

Thanks to many in our congressional delegation and our federal partners, we have billions more headed our way from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Plan that we'll use to turbocharge our efforts.

So, when you see those orange barrels:

#1, slow down-there are people working.

And #2, those barrels mean we're moving dirt and fixing the damn roads.

I know at times our nation's capital feels hopelessly gridlocked, but at our state capitol, Republicans and Democrats have shown we can come together to put Michiganders first.

Together, we delivered over \$420 million dollars in relief to small businesses, empowering them to expand operations and retain over 200,000 jobs through COVID.

We expanded access to high-quality childcare, and now over 1 in 3 children in Michigan 12 and under are eligible for low or no-cost childcare. You can go to [michigan.gov/childcare](https://michigan.gov/childcare) to see if you're eligible too.

For our Michigan State Police, who protect and serve with the utmost professionalism, we built new posts in Walker and West Branch. For law enforcement, we funded better training, delivered hazard pay, and expanded resources for local police departments. As a former prosecutor, public safety is a core issue for me. We will keep making investments to reduce crime and protect families.

And our criminal justice reforms have helped hundreds of thousands of Michiganders who served their time secure jobs and housing with a clean slate.

Together, we cared for those who served our nation by building a new veteran's home in Macomb County and another home in Grand Rapids.

We eliminated the cost barrier for 170,000 Michiganders, who are getting skills and better-paying jobs through Michigan Reconnect and Futures for Frontliners. These programs boost our economy and empower our people.

People like Caroline, a former in-home care provider, and mom of 2 who got straight As her first semester at Mott Community College. And Jodi, a Reconnect recipient-the first of 8 siblings to go to college-she's on the dean's list at Grand Rapids Community College. These programs have given them opportunity and opened new doors for their families. I want them to know we're all rooting for them.

Together, we made the largest education investment in state history without raising taxes-something we've done 3 years in a row. Last year, we closed the funding gap between schools-something 4 governors before me tried to do-investing \$8,700 into every student in every district to improve their in-class experience.

We invested in on-campus mental health and delivered checks directly to educators, who go above and beyond for our kids every day.

I know how anxious and tired parents are feeling right now. As a mom, I get it. That's why I'm making investments where they matter most-in classrooms, to help our kids get caught up.

And to our teachers, childcare professionals, aides, bus drivers, custodians, paraprofessionals, administration-I see you. Thank you for working tirelessly to help our kids thrive. We're going to keep investing in recruitment and retention to increase your ranks.

Soon, I'll introduce a school aid budget that will mark the biggest state education funding increase in more than 20 years-without raising taxes.

I want to be crystal clear: students belong in school.

We know it's where they learn best. Remote learning is not as fulfilling or conducive to a child's growth. In-person learning is critical to social development and mental health. That's why we will do everything we can to keep kids in the classroom.

We've all been through a lot. It's rational to feel frustrated. Exhausted. Even cynical. Fortunately, the cure for cynicism is competence. These bipartisan accomplishments are a testament to what we can do together. We must believe that better things are possible because that is the only way they ever get done.

Yesterday, we saw proof.

Last month, we worked together to sharpen Michigan's economic development tools. And this week, we landed a \$7 billion dollar investment from General Motors that will create and retain 5,000 good-paying jobs manufacturing electric vehicle batteries in Lansing and Orion Township. The future of the auto industry is being built in Michigan, in plants like this one by union members. And we are just getting started.

Historically, the knock on Michigan was that 1) we didn't have the tools to compete with other states 2) we moved too slowly and 3) state government was dysfunctional.

Yesterday, the world saw what we can accomplish together. Democrats, Republicans, businesses, utilities, and labor joined forces to equip Michigan with solid economic tools to attract big projects and create thousands of jobs.

We showed the world that we have tools, we move fast, and we work together. And Michigan is going to win.

That brings us to what's next. Tonight, I'm putting forward proposals that will build on the work we've done together and grow our economy by cutting taxes and lowering costs.

First, taxes. I believe that whenever possible, we should make taxes more fair for our seniors and working families. Michiganders should be able to keep more of what they've earned.

In December, I signed a bipartisan bill cutting personal property taxes for small businesses owners. And last November, we repealed the tampon tax-the sales tax on menstrual products-saving women hundreds of dollars in taxes. When it comes to delivering for women, I will keep finding ways to lower their costs. And I'll veto any legislation that would take away their right to choose.

My proposals tonight will cut taxes for seniors and working families.

For our seniors, let's work together to repeal the retirement tax.

I first called to repeal this tax back in 2019, and it's time to get it done. If we phase it out over the next few years, we can save half a million households in Michigan an average of \$1,000 bucks a year. That's money for prescriptions, rent, car payments, or gifts for grandkids.

Repealing the retirement tax will help real people.

People like Tim from Marquette or Susan and Dick from Jackson.

Tim worked for 30 years as a corrections officer-a difficult, dangerous line of work. Susan and Dick taught for over 30 years in Branch and Hillsdale County.

They served their communities, saved, and did everything right. But after they finally retired and budgeted on their fixed incomes, their pensions, 401ks, and IRAs were taxed.

They all had to go back to work just to pay the bills. Today, Tim is painting and working odd jobs, while Dick is a Drivers Ed instructor. Susan worked for over a decade at a hair salon. After a lifetime of work, they still worry about affording the essentials.

When I was in the legislature, I fought the retirement tax because it was wrong. Let's make it right. We can keep our word to Tim, Susan, Dick, and every Michigander who worked hard and played by the rules.



I'm ready to work across the aisle to roll back the retirement tax and save 500,000 households in Michigan an average of \$1,000 bucks a year.

Now, let's talk about cutting taxes for people working full-time but who still can't get ahead.

It's time to increase the Michigan Earned Income Tax Credit. The EITC is a bipartisan tax break for families offered at the federal and state level. It's part of the refund you get when you file your taxes.

In 2010, Michiganders received an almost \$3,000 tax refund from the combined EITC. But a year later, taxes on working families went up to pay for a tax giveaway for big corporations they didn't need. That's not right.

Restoring the EITC lifts more than 22,000 people out of working poverty. And it sends 730,000 families an average refund of almost \$3,000 bucks that they can use to pay the bills. Nearly 1 million kids-almost half the kids in Michigan-benefit when we raise the EITC. It means new backpacks, warmer coats, and more hot meals.

Let's get it done.

Now, let's talk about lowering costs...

We are all bearing the brunt of inflation. You see it when you buy groceries or boots for your kids. We have made meaningful progress to lower costs, and we should build on that work now.

In 2019, I signed bipartisan auto insurance reform, saving drivers hundreds of dollars a year. Thanks to our reform, insurance companies are sending every driver a \$400 refund check per vehicle by May 9th this year.

And our Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson is saving Michiganders time and money because we can renew our licenses and plates online or stop in the office for an average of 20 minutes.

We also lowered the cost of higher education thanks to Michigan Reconnect and Futures for Frontliners, and we are delivering home heating help on energy bills so over 175,000 families can stay warm and safe through the winter.

We've done a lot of good work to lower costs, but I know families are still feeling squeezed. We must do more. Rolling back the retirement tax and raising the Michigan EITC will keep more money in people's pockets, and we can ensure less comes out. Tonight, I have two proposals to lower costs on insulin and cars and one to expand access to mental health.

First, insulin.

Hundreds of thousands of Michiganders need insulin to survive. The average cost of a single vial is almost 100 bucks. Most people who use it need two or three vials a month, which is up to \$3,600 a year. Too many Michiganders are forced to forgo insulin or ration it-putting their lives at risk.

For years, drug companies have been jacking up insulin prices. The average price tripled from 2009 to 2019. They reap billions on life-saving medicine because without serious competition, they name their own price. That is unconscionable.

Yesterday, Attorney General Dana Nessel took action. She launched an investigation under the Michigan Consumer Protection Act into one of the three largest drug

companies that makes nearly all the insulin in the U.S.

Meanwhile, in the Michigan Legislature, there have been bipartisan bills introduced to cap the cost of insulin at \$50 bucks a month.

We all agree that insulin costs too much, and I know we can work together to hold drug companies accountable, lower costs, and save lives. Let's get that done too.

Next, let's talk about making electric vehicles more affordable.

As we saw this week, we are building on our rich auto manufacturing heritage and moving towards a clean energy future. Tonight, I want to talk about how we can help Michigan's families be a part of the clean energy transition by lowering the cost of electric vehicles.

Every year, thousands more electric vehicles are sold in Michigan and all our major auto makers have committed to electrifying 100% of their fleets over the next 10-15 years. Electric vehicles cost half as much to fuel and maintain as gas powered cars. Switching to electric will save families thousands of dollars a year.

That's why I am proposing a combined \$2,500 electric vehicle rebate for families-\$2,000 for the car and \$500 for in-home charging equipment. This will build on the \$7,500 federal electric vehicle credit. If we get this done, we can lower the cost of electric vehicles by nearly \$10,000. We can make it easier for Michiganders to go electric.

Finally, let's talk about mental health.

We should invest in our mental health workforce so we can expand access. Nearly 40% of Michiganders do not get treatment for their mental illness. We will address this shortfall by expanding Michigan's Loan Repayment Program for mental health

professionals. And we will make a historic investment to retain and recruit hundreds more mental health workers.

I will propose another bold investment in mental health in next year's school aid budget too, building on work we did last year to help schools hire more than 560 nurses, counselors, and social workers.

Together, we can grow our mental health workforce and expand access to mental health services.

Tonight, I laid out my plans to cut taxes for retirees and working families, lower costs on insulin and electric vehicles, and expand access to mental health. As always, I will work with anyone to deliver on these kitchen-table issues.

I'll also work to invest federal resources we have received with plans I released last year like MI New Economy, which would grow the middle class, support small businesses, and invest in our communities. I also have a message for the folks in DC-fund the CHIPS Act so we can fight the chip crisis head-on.

We have a once-in-a-generation opportunity on our hands, and I know that together, we can do big things.

Through everything we've faced over the last few years, I thought often about the time in my life when I was sandwiched between 2 generations of my family-taking care of my newborn daughter and my mom who was dying of brain cancer.

I adjusted to a new job, fought my mom's insurance company, and cared for my baby. I learned I could do more than I had ever imagined. It can be hard to see in the moment, but tough times make us stronger.

Making a difference for the people we love. It's what motivates all of us. It's the reason I'm standing here today. It's why I get up determined and optimistic about our future. I want a better future for my girls and all our kids. Even on the hardest day, I am grateful to serve my fellow Michiganders.

That desire to do drives so many of us. We all have a story when we stepped up and did more than we thought we could for the people we love most. That's our spirit. It lives in our stories. We are doers, united against inaction. Optimists, united against pessimism. Believers, united against cynicism. We fight for each other, not with each other. We come together to get things done. We are capable of greatness.

The question we have to ask ourselves is: do we believe in Michigan? I know I do. I believe because of you. I will work hard every day to put Michiganders first. I will always believe in Michigan because we are strong and getting stronger every day. Thank you and goodnight.

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Governor

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