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Michigan partners spotlight Gov. Whitmer's budget recommendations to support employment opportunities for Michiganders with disabilities

LANSING, Mich. — The Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity (LEO) partnered with CVS Health and Goodwill Industries of Greater Detroit on Wednesday, joining local community members, business leaders and stakeholders to discuss Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's FY25 budget recommendations that support employment opportunities for Michiganders with disabilities. The event, held at Goodwill Industries' facility in Detroit, included a roundtable discussion and a tour of the CVS Health Workforce Innovation and Talent Center.

"Governor Whitmer's proposed budget recommendation includes \$5.9 million to expand our vocational rehabilitation services to increase employment for individuals with disabilities," said **LEO Director Susan Corbin**. "This is an investment that will support nearly 25% of Michigan's population and help businesses meet their need for qualified talent, identify barriers, set up accommodations, and provide consultation and education to the business based on their unique needs."

In February, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer released her [sixth executive budget recommendation](#) that will lower costs, power economic development and build a brighter future to ensure any person or business can "make it" in Michigan. The proposed \$5.9 million investment to expand vocational rehabilitation services through the Bureau of Services for Blind Persons (BSBP) and Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) will increase employment-related support for individuals with disabilities.

"It's important to understand that federal funding for vocational rehabilitation requires a state match, so the Governor's proposed \$1.25 million investment in the state's general fund to support vocational rehabilitation will allow Michigan to access about \$4.5 million in federal funding," said **Stephanie Beckhorn, director of LEO's Office of Employment and Training**. "Vocational rehabilitation provides the training, support and resources people with disabilities need to become self-sufficient, highly productive members of the workforce – benefitting not only these individuals, but their families, businesses and communities."

Vocational rehabilitation helps people with disabilities achieve financial independence and improve their overall quality of life. It also supports Michigan businesses, helping them develop a reliable pipeline of talent who bring different perspectives, experiences and problem-solving abilities to the table, fostering innovation and creativity.

During fiscal year 2023, preliminary data shows BSBP and MRS helped nearly 31,000 individuals and more than 6,900 businesses. Michigan vocational rehabilitation customers have the highest earnings in the nation. Michigan's vocational rehabilitation programs rank second nationally for helping customers secure employment.

Beckhorn moderated the roundtable discussion which included Corbin and **Lisa Kisiel**, BSBP Field Services Director; **Sigrid Adams**, MRS Deputy Director; **Felicia Hunter**, Goodwill Industries of Greater Detroit's Chief Mission Officer; and **Layna Gardner-Lott**, CVS Health's Workforce Innovation Talent Center Manager.

The [CVS Health Workforce Innovation & Talent Center](#) offers workforce development trainings, certifications courses and professional education programs specifically designed for individuals facing barriers to opportunity who may not only need jobs, but also additional support to help ensure long-term success.

[Goodwill Industries](#) provides personal and workforce development training for Metro Detroit residents with barriers to employment, including those living with physical, intellectual or developmental disabilities, or mental health challenges and those who are justice involved.

Learn more about Michigan Rehabilitation Services by visiting [Michigan.gov/MRS](#). For more information about the Bureau of Services for Blind Persons, visit [Michigan.gov/BSBP](#).

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