

HEALTH POLICY

The United States spends more than two times the average of other developed countries on healthcare, and our outcomes are not good. By 2026, national healthcare spending will reach \$5.7 trillion dollars, about 21% of the projected GDP. We should work to reduce healthcare spending, improve health outcomes and address the health disparities of our most vulnerable populations. Ensuring we have clean air to breath, healthy water to drink, fresh fruits and veggies to eat, and safe places to live and raise our families will go a long way to improving Michiganders' health and well-being. You cannot be healthy if you live in an unhealthy home or unhealthy community; that is what environmental health addresses.

Lead Poisoning Prevention

We have known about health risks of lead for more than 100 years, but it is still in our homes and workplaces. Children under the age of 6 are particularly vulnerable if exposed to lead and are at risk of lower IQs, stunted growth, hyperactivity, increased rates of incarceration and lost earning potential if lead levels are high. Lead poisoning costs Michigan at least \$270 million a year. For most children, the primary sources of lead exposure are house paint, soil, dust and drinking water. Our focus is to eliminate exposure, test all Michigan children early and limit the negative impacts on their lives.

Lead in Buildings

Most lead in buildings is the result of lead in the paint. Some communities have 20% of their children poisoned by lead, many from their own homes.

Michigan Environmental Council advocates for:

- Required lead testing of all Michigan 1- and 2-year-olds to identify high-risk communities and serve impacted children and their families early.
- Required lead testing in dwellings when ownership or occupancy changes so new families know if lead is present before they move in.
- Efforts that prevent lead poisoning, not react after the damage is done.
- Find a sustainable funding source to make homes lead safe and get impacted children the help that they need.

Lead in Water

Unless water is accurately tested, lead can go undetected, posing a risk to those who drink it.



Lead in drinking water is a special risk to infants and children because they eat and drink more than adults by weight and have a harder time eliminating lead from their bodies. Infants on formula have the greatest risk of lead exposure in drinking water because water, by volume is their primary food source. Although most of the attention has focused on Flint, high levels of lead in drinking water can happen virtually anywhere in the state.

Michigan Environmental Council advocates for:

- Requiring municipal water systems to assess whether they have leaded water pipes, and if they do, to notify customers and develop a plan to replace all lead services lines in the coming years
- Reducing the level of lead that is acceptable in drinking water and tightening testing protocols
- Educate residents about lead in drinking water, such as how older homes' faucets and fixtures can contribute to the problem.

Healthy Food Access

Diet and exercise are environmental factors that impact obesity, one of the nation's greatest health risks and leading cause of chronic illnesses and preventable health conditions. Michigan is the 10th fattest state in the nation with a 32.5% adult obesity rate in 2017. Lack of access to healthy foods like fruits and veggies are a factor in Michigan's high rate of obesity. Almost 2 million Michiganders, including 300,000 children, live in communities with limited access to healthy food. These communities range from large urban centers to small, rural, agrarian communities.



Michigan Environmental Council advocates for:

- Supporting local sustainable food initiatives, like community supported agriculture, and making them affordable for vulnerable families.
- Providing additional state dollars to support expansion of [10 Cents a Meal for Michigan's Kids & Farms](#) and ending “lunch shaming” by making sure lunch account balances don't impact kids.
- Providing a tax break for farmers who donate surplus produce to food banks and pantries.
- Looking at state food offerings in our parks, campgrounds and rest area vending and making sure the state is leading by example with healthy balanced offerings.

CONTACT

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