**Resolution**

Reference Categories: Infrastructure, Education, Health Care, Economy, Social Justice

Title of Resolutions: **Affordable Broadband Internet for All Michigan Households**

Drafted by: Charles Stockwell (for the Tuscola Democratic Party) and Cathy Albro (for the Rural Caucus)

Adopted by: The MDP Rural Caucus and the Barry County Democratic Party

**WHEREAS,** broadband internet service is an essential utility—like electricity, clean water, and good roads—and has recently become even more essential because the COVID-19 pandemic and consequential stay-at-home orders have compelled more Michigan residents to work from home, attend virtual classrooms, and utilize telehealth services; and

**WHEREAS,** an estimated 368,000 Michigan households, mostly in rural areas, have no access to a broadband connection, and another 2 million households have access only to a single internet service provider with little or no incentive to improve service or keep prices down; and

**WHEREAS,**at least one-third of low-income Michigan families living in areas with broadband service do not have broadband access because they cannot afford to purchase required connection devices or pay monthly service fees; and

**WHEREAS,** an estimated 462,000 K-12 students in Michigan do not have broadband access at home and at least half of these students say they cannot complete their homework and 42 percent 42 percent stated they received lower grades; and

**WHEREAS,** telemedicine services offer better access to health care, especially for those who live in rural areas, and offer significant cost savings to patients by eliminating the need to take time off work, arrange for childcare, and travel to the doctor’s office, with one study finding that the average cost savings was $156 per patient per visit; and

**WHEREAS,** with currently only 5% (nationally) of rural residents having digital jobs; and digital jobs tending to be higher paying, more resilient, and more transferable; access to rural broadband would allow more residents to have digital jobs and would encourage more young people to stay in or move to rural communities; and

**WHEREAS,** access to broadband will allow small businesses in rural areas to access markets across the globe and increase good-paying employment opportunities in rural areas; and

**WHEREAS,**studies have shown that households with a broadband connection receive an average economic benefit of approximately $1,850 per year, due to higher income and/or cost savings, suggesting that if the estimated 1,363,000 Michigan households without broadband access were connected, they would experience a total economic benefit of 2.52 billion dollars per year;

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED,** that the Michigan Democratic Party call upon state and local governments to urgently develop policies and provide funding to increase access to affordable broadband internet service for all Michigan households, including support for broadband to become a public utility with universal access.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** that this resolution be forwarded to the Michigan Democratic Party with a recommendation for its acceptance and placement in the appropriate document or with the appropriate committee for action.

Signature of the Barry County Democratic Committee Chair\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Resolution**

Reference Categories: Agriculture, Climate Change

Title of Resolution: **Climate Change Solutions Through Agricultural Practices**

Drafted by: Cathy Albro 3862 Josie Ln. Middleville, MI 49333 (616)460-0193

Adopted by: The MDP Rural Caucus and the Barry County Democratic Party

**WHEREAS**, Michigan’s farmers, foresters, and ranchers are experiencing the effects of climate change (late springs, season extensions, drought, flooding, high winds, new invasive pests) with increasing occurrences leading to smaller yields, less quality, and total loss of crops; and

**WHEREAS**, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) issued a report in 2018 that stated climate-related risks to health, livelihoods, food security, water supply, human security, and economic growth are projected to increase with global warming of 1.5°C and increase further with 2°C; and

**WHEREAS**, the IPCC stated in their 2018 report that we must act quickly to reverse the threat of climate change, based on modeling showing only a 10-year window to reach a critical 45% decline in CO2 emissions by 2030; and

**WHEREAS,** Michigan’s farmers, foresters, and ranchers have an opportunity to make a significant impact toward our 2030 CO2 emission reduction goal by incorporating agricultural practices that sequester carbon, mitigate climate change, increase yields with higher nutrient values, and create more resiliency to climate change; and

**WHEREAS,** solar, wind, geothermal, and biomass are all clean energy generation sources that could provide landowners with a secondary income and beneficial to our environment; and

**WHEREAS**, the Michigan Democratic Party in the past has fallen short of building relationships and support in rural Michigan.

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** **THAT** the Michigan Democratic Party supports Senator Debbie Stabenow, Chairwoman of the U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, as she leads federal policy decisions to solve our critical climate change problems.

We support policies that would motivate farmers, foresters, and ranchers to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adopt practices to increase soil carbon sequestration (such as planting cover crops, no-till, composting, crop rotation, etc.).

We expect farmers, foresters, and ranchers to be included in these decisions of voluntary compliance and include significant investments from the government to facilitate changes in practice and provide financial and other benefits for those contributing to the solutions and assuring protection of long-term property values.

Michigan Democrats must build relationships with rural community members, listen to them, facilitate learning, support allied candidates, and message the progress for which Democrats are responsible.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that this resolution be forwarded to the State Democratic Party with a recommendation for its acceptance and placement in the appropriate document or with appropriate committee for action.

Signature of the Barry County Democratic Committee Chair\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Resolution

Reference Categories: State Platform, Economy, Agriculture, Human Rights/Social Welfare

Title of Resolution: Advancing the Interests of Rural Communities: Supporting Small, Mid-Sized and Family Farms

Drafted by Mark D. Zacharda and Mark Ludwig, MDP Rural Caucus

Adopted by: The MDP Rural Caucus and the Barry County Democratic Party

WHEREAS, over the past several decades, there has been a steady degradation in the quality of life and opportunities available in the rural communities of Michigan, in part due to policies that have allowed consolidation and market distortions in favor of large agribusinesses over the interest of farmers; and

WHEREAS, such policies result in an unfair distribution of the significant economic value extracted from the land and labor provided by our rural population, much of this economic value being funneled to large agribusinesses, commonly located in urban centers, while the American farmer’s share of each retail food dollar has fallen from 50 cents in 1952 to 15 cents today, leading not only to a loss of local jobs in the community and loss of a fair revenue from farm products, but also to farmers being forced to become customers of the very agribusinesses that have caused so much of their plight and being compelled to contribute to the bottom line of these corporations due to limited supply choices for equipment, seeds, chemicals, and fertilizer; and

WHEREAS, Americans in counties with unsustainable agricultural practices are more likely to have unsafe drinking water, lower incomes, and greater economic inequality; and

WHEREAS, the Biden Administration climate change mitigation proposals will push the entire agriculture sector toward scale neutral carbon-capture farming practices such as managed grazing, no-till crop production and cover crops; and

WHEREAS, access to internet broadband would allow small farmers to access information that would make farming more efficient, sustainable, and environmentally friendly, and to find new customers and communicate with existing customers efficiently; and

WHEREAS, access to information and education, including but not limited to research from national and state sources (e.g. MSU Extension), is becoming more limited, but is needed to combat pests and promote efficient and environmentally sound farming practices; and

WHEREAS, farmers are becoming older, and young people do not see farming as a way to sustainably raise their families.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the MDP should advocate for the Michigan Legislature and/or the USDA to pursue antitrust enforcement to break up agricultural monopolies and allow for greater choice and opportunity for people living in the vast rural areas of the state.

The MDP should advocate for the Michigan Legislature and/or the USDA for the pursuit of agricultural policy that enables smaller farms and farm support operations economic opportunity and access to resources.

The MDP should advocate for programs that enable young people to become and remain farmers who can earn a living to support their families on a small farm.

The MDP should advocate for programs promoting scale neutral farm practices which are shown to capture soil carbon and mitigate the effects of climate change.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that this resolution be forwarded to the State Democratic Party with a recommendation for its acceptance and placement in the appropriate document or with appropriate committee for action.

RESOLUTION

Reference Categories: Human Rights/Social Welfare

Title of Resolution: Democrats Must Work for Improved Quality of Life and Equity for Rural Americans of Color

Drafted by: Elspeth Inglis 11084 Gurd Rd, Delton, MI, 49046 269-671-5520

Adopted by: The MDP Rural Caucus

WHEREAS: Rural America is home to two million immigrants, more than three million Native Americans and Alaska Natives, and eight million others who identify as people of color; and,

WHEREAS: One in five Americans live in rural communities, and more than one in five (22 percent) rural residents are people of color. Rural Native Americans, Asian and Latinix groups are growing fastest, followed by African Americans; and,

WHEREAS: The issues of racism, power structures, implicit bias and historical inequities are just as ingrained in rural counties as they are in urban areas; and,

WHEREAS:Due to structural racism within the USDA and other government agencies, Black farmers have historically received less financial and technical support than their white peers received, putting them at a significant disadvantage; and,

WHEREAS: Although rural people overall are more aligned with Republicans, 38% of rural registered voters are Democrats, (according to the Pew Research Center); and,

WHEREAS: Although politically conservative candidates often win races in agriculture-dependent rural communities, politically progressive candidates frequently do better in rural communities with strong recreation, amenity-based, and service-based economies; and,

WHEREAS: The” urban-rural divide” is more myth than truth; and,

WHEREAS: Catering to that myth prioritizes the political concerns of an imagined, white rural monolith and erases the needs of rural people of color, especially during a pandemic which is disproportionately devastating rural Black, Latinix and Native American communities; THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED THAT: The MDP Rural Caucus will strive to encourage and support legislation that will implement improvements to rural communities’ quality of life, AND especially for equity for its most marginalized citizens.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, THAT this resolution be forwarded to the State Democratic Party with a recommendation for its acceptance and placement in the appropriate document or with appropriate committee for action.

SIGNATURE OF CHAIRPERSON: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Date\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Resolution**

Reference Category: Health and Health Care

**TITLE OF RESOLUTION**: **Addressing Unmet Health Care Priorities in Rural Michigan**

Drafted by: Richard L. Douglass 1151 Crocker Blvd. Tawas City, MI 48763 810-599-4642 (cell)

Adopted by: The MDP Rural Caucus

**WHEREAS,** health problems in rural Michigan reflect long term trends in demographics, economic opportunity, and other features of rural communities. Rural Michiganders are at elevated risk because the prevalence of many health problems is not met with available, affordable, accessible, or adequate medical care. Primary care, public health education, and tertiary hospital care are all deficient in most of Michigan's rural counties. The consequences include increased morbidity and mortality, disability, and cycles of unemployment or underemployment due to unmet medical problems. Prevalent medical disability, including but not limited to complications of addictions or obesity, further distresses rural economies. Medical and public health challenges associated with an aging population, single parent households, low performance in education or job training, and lack of health insurance set rural communities apart from the rest of Michigan's population.

**WHEREAS,** in rural Michigan many rural hospitals are closed or financially struggling, local public health agencies are understaffed, and mental health services are largely unavailable. In rural Michigan it is difficult to recruit medical providers due to expectations of lower compensation, and competition from non-rural communities. Specialties such as cardiovascular medicine, oncology, and orthopedic medicine are accessed by rural populations only through significant travel, increasing unreimbursed out-of-pocket expenses in order to obtain care that is routinely available in non-rural areas. There is an acute shortage of emergency, critical care, intensive care, obstetrical care, and services for mental health problems or addictions.

**WHEREAS,** many working age rural residents lack adequate health insurance despite Healthy Michigan and exchanges provided by the Affordable Care Act. A high proportion of Medicare-eligible seniors are dual eligible with Medicaid because of widespread poverty. Poor levels of health education lead to resistance to vaccination programs and non-compliance with prescription regimens, missed follow-up medical appointments, and self-medication that can lead to decreased health and loss of independence.

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, THAT the Michigan Democratic Party investigate the status of health care and medical services in rural populations and then present strategies to the Legislature to mitigate the lack of access, availability, adequacy and appropriateness of health care, medical specialty care, mental health services, public health education, health outreach and related services that disadvantage Michigan's rural populations. In addition, the Michigan Democratic Party should promote an evidence-based, statewide rural health initiative to increase the number of rural health clinics, the number of primary care providers, the availability of specialized medical services in hospitals, telemedicine services and public health programs. The initiative should aim to increase the compliment of medical, nursing, nurse practitioners, mental health specialists and dental providers in rural areas. The Party should defend and increase all affordable and effective health insurance options for rural, underserved Michiganders.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that this Resolution shall be forwarded to the State Democratic Party with a recommendation for its acceptance and placement in the appropriate document or with appropriate committee for action.

SIGNATURE OF MDP Rural Caucus Co-Chairs: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_