

House District 78

Governor Whitmer's plan for COVID-19 relief would directly help Michiganders. Congress passed a bipartisan funding bill that sent much-needed dollars to Michigan to help us return to normal. The Governor's plan includes:

- Funding for Michigan schools to help return to in-person learning.
- Rent and mortgage assistance to keep Michiganders in their homes.
- Restored unemployment as Michigan returns to work.
- Food assistance for Michigan families who are struggling to buy groceries.

More than \$3.3 billion of that federal funding is being held in the Legislature.

Here's what that means for House District 78:

Schools

More than \$15 million in unallocated funds for public schools affecting 12,458 kids in grades K-12. That amounts to \$ 1,208.47 per student in District 78 schools.

\$15,055,145 that would help schools in District 78 pay for COVID-19 testing, academic support, social and emotional support for students, and ongoing costs related to the pandemic is currently sitting in the Michigan State Treasury, including:

- \$1.7 million for Niles Community Schools
- \$512,611 for Buchanan Community Schools

Renters and Homeowners

Even before the pandemic began, **35% of renters in District 78 and another 21% of homeowners struggled to afford their monthly housing payments.**

The legislature is withholding **\$339 million** that was meant to keep Michigan families safely in their homes.

Unemployed Workers

Governor Whitmer's plan includes a restoration of unemployment benefits back to 26 weeks. As of March 2021, there are approximately **10,100 active unemployment claims in Berrien County and 2,100 in Cass County.**

Both Berrien and Cass Counties have unemployment rates higher than the state average:

- 7.2% unemployment in Berrien County, up from 4.5% in January 2020
- 6.1% unemployment in Cass County, up from 4.6% in January 2020

Unemployed workers in District 78 could receive **\$2,172 more in benefits** if the Legislature restored the program back to 26 weeks.

Families Needing Food

Even before the pandemic began, many families in District 78 needed help to buy enough food.

- In Berrien County, 59% of K-12 students receive free or reduced price school lunches. 53% of children ages 4 and under receive WIC assistance.
- In Cass County, 54% of K-12 students receive free or reduced price school lunches. 50% of children ages 4 and under receive WIC assistance.

Michigan food banks and community food pantries have reported massive increases in the number of people needing help due to the pandemic. Many of those needing food assistance in District 78 have never used a food bank or food pantry before.

The Legislature is still sitting on **\$2.1 billion** in federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) funding that would help these families and others in Michigan who continue to struggle to afford food because of the pandemic.