



DANIEL SAAD/CRAIN'S DETROIT BUSINESS

EDITORIAL

Primary's over. Let's drill down on issues that matter

Michigan's primary election — and the emphasis on ideological extremes that makes primaries so bruising — is over. Time to dig in on the issues that matter.

To us, that means focusing on what it will take to get Michigan back on solid economic footing post-COVID; creating a tax and regulatory environment where business can thrive; and creating, attracting and retaining the talent needed to keep the state competitive.

It might not get the heart pounding and passions pumping like partisan red meat does, but it's what really matters.

We haven't heard enough about so-called "pocketbook issues" during a primary dominated by the culture wars, or solving problems that affect all Michiganders, regardless of party.

Those include:

► K-12 teacher shortages and post-COVID learning loss. Crain's has reported on numerous studies this year

— and for years before that — showing public education in Michigan is in crisis. College enrollment is trending down in Southeast Michigan. There is perhaps no greater impediment to progress in this state than a poorly educated or unprepared workforce.

► Making higher education affordable. The state that manages to make post-secondary

degrees attainable by getting costs under control and increasing public funding to ease the scourge of crushing student debt will win.

► Small business recovery. Millions of federal dollars allocated to help Michigan businesses affected by COVID shutdowns remain un-

spent. Getting that money flowing is key.

► Health care staffing and budget woes. Crain's Dustin Walsh reported recently that COVID-era federal support for hospitals is expiring, leaving financial gaps that aren't easy to fill in any way other than reducing services.

► Gun violence as a public health issue. The state has allocated significantly more money in its 2023 budget — about \$210 million — to make schools safer, but the tragedy at Oxford High School is a gutting reminder that it will take more than money to address this crisis.

► Supply chain disruptions. Manufacturers continue to struggle with global chip shortages. Congress passed a bill last month to provide money and tax credits to encourage domestic production of microchips. Will Michigan — home base to the chip-dependent auto industry — be able to position itself to take advantage?

► Smarter economic development policy. The state is losing high-tech manufacturing to southern states and, though progress has been made, still has an economy desperately in need of diversification that happens to be focused on an automotive industry going through the biggest change it's ever seen.

We could go on: How should Michigan spend its eye-popping \$7 billion budget surplus? How does the state balance the need for individual and corporate tax relief with badly needed infrastructure investment? Critical questions, all.

Social issues aren't going away in November, to be sure. The overturn of *Roe v. Wade* has upended the political landscape in far-reaching ways, and has drawn companies into the fray as they re-evaluate health care coverage in light of new state-by-state restrictions.

But we hope some of the sideshow silliness that characterized the primary campaigns will give way to more serious discussion this fall. Michigan residents need it, and deserve it.

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ANALYSIS

In colleges of today, more support is needed

BY LAWRENCE J. BURNS



Lawrence J. Burns is president and CEO of the Detroit-based Children's Foundation.

As summer comes to an end and we look forward to football, cool evenings, and returning to the classroom, I thought it was important to share with you a major initiative of The Children's Foundation and our affiliate partner, the Jamie Daniels Foundation.

When I was a student at Central Michigan University in the mid-1970s, it was pretty much a carefree environment, and in many ways the world was a much different place. The

drinking age in Michigan at that time was 18, so all students were legally enjoying festive times at places like The Cabin, Wayside Central, and The Bird. I certainly had never heard of opioids, and my vision of a heroin addict was someone on the streets of a city far away from Mount Pleasant or other college campuses.

We did have the occasional unfortunate situation where a classmate suddenly went home, but we didn't know why. We sometimes found out later it was because he or she was drinking too much or suffering from a mental health concern. They left campus, and we went on about our lives.

Fast forward to today — the average college student has experienced life much differently, both in their communities and in the world. They face competition to get into school, competition to make their favorite sports team or high school program, and social media which might be the most problematic. Cell phones and cameras are literally everywhere you go. Thank goodness those weren't around at Austin Catholic Prep or CMU when I was their age.

Now, the drinking age is 21 and we are paying well over a dollar for a bottle of water. Not only that, but marijuana is legalized. Who would've thought that was even possible in 1978? I also often wonder what people would have thought of me if I said that in 2022 there would be e-cigarettes and vaping.

Many of our youth are now on either mood enhancing drugs or other powerful medications. The highly addictive nature of opioids has become a crisis that many times leads to heroin addiction and tragic overdoses. We all have either lost loved ones or certainly know someone who has been impacted by the disease known today as substance use disorder.

The Children's Foundation and our affiliate partner, the Jamie Daniels Foundation, are committed to helping students recover from substance use disorder and stay in school. We believe that recovery is possible, and that education is the way to remain hopeful that one's life will be fulfilling, promising, and successful.

We are supporting seven collegiate recovery programs throughout Michigan. These programs are designed to help students suffering from addiction stay alive, stay in school, stay on campus, and graduate. Recovery is one thing but having the resilience and the hope that one can maintain sobriety and live an enjoyable life is another. These programs are critical to helping students stay on the path to success.

We started this journey with Michigan State University's collegiate recovery initiative, and now we are proud to say we're involved with collegiate recovery programs at Oakland University, Central Michigan University, Ferris State University, Mid-Michigan College, the University of Michigan, Washtenaw Community College, and more campuses soon.

Every student deserves a chance to experience college and all the life learning experiences that come along with it. Every student deserves to graduate, enter into a field and begin a career they have been dreaming of for years.

If you have a child, a grandchild, or a friend going back to school, please pay attention to their behavior over the coming months. There are many signs that indicate substance use disorder or that their mental health could be suffering. It may be that they are quieter than normal, not calling as much, or other changes in their behavior. Ask questions and don't be afraid to be intrusive. Prevention is key.

Please join The Children's Foundation, the Jamie Daniels Foundation, and our partners to continue the effort to help and support young people suffering from substance use disorder to live a healthy, fulfilling, and successful life.



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