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GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
LANSING

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Lt. Governor Gilchrist highlights 22 Neighborhood Wellness Centers offering free preventive health screenings to address racial health disparities through \$17 million FY24 budget investment
Substance use prevention program being piloted at seven sites

LANSING, Mich. – Lt. Governor Garlin Gilchrist II spoke about how key budget investments are removing barriers, addressing racial health disparities and continuing the work of the Racial Disparities Task Force during a stop today at a [Neighborhood Wellness Center](#) in Detroit.

He was joined at Vernon Chapel A.M.E. Church by Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) Director Elizabeth Hertel and Tommy Stallworth, MDHHS senior advisor and former director of the Governor's Coronavirus Racial Disparities Task Force. The site is led by Rev. Sharinese Jackson and is one of 22 [Neighborhood Wellness Centers](#) offering free preventive health care services, community health workers and substance use disorder prevention. This is being funded through a \$17 million investment in the FY2024 budget.

“Governor Whitmer and I are proud of our work to address racial health disparities and expand access to affordable health care,” said Lt. Governor Gilchrist II. “Growing out of our work to tackle racial disparities in COVID-19 cases and deaths, the 22 Neighborhood Wellness Centers throughout Michigan meet residents where they are and connect them to screenings, treatment and more. They are a testament to Michigan’s continued commitment to expanding health care access and helping more individuals and families ‘make it’ in Michigan.”

In August 2020, COVID-19 Neighborhood Testing Sites were established to reduce health and economic disparities in underserved areas by providing accessible COVID-19 testing services from trusted community partners, including the faith-based community. The sites have now evolved to offer additional health and wellness services at no cost in these communities with limited access to preventive health care services.

“Our neighborhood sites have a proven track record of reducing disparities and meeting communities where they are,” said MDHHS Director Hertel. “These trusted entities have evolved to provide no-cost health and wellness services in communities where there are higher risks for adverse health outcomes.”



Pictured (l. to r.) Rev. Sharinese Jackson, Vernon Chapel A.M.E. Church; Elizabeth Hertel, MDHHS director; Tommy Stallworth, MDHHS senior advisor; Lt. Governor Garlin Gilchrist II; and MDHHS staff members who work on the Neighborhood Wellness Center program Aisha Benton; Ariel Ragin, Len Uller and Tom O'Donohue.

Neighborhood Wellness Centers are currently providing the following services to community members based on their feedback:

- blood pressure screenings.
- Diabetes screenings.
- Cholesterol screenings.
- COVID-19 and flu testing.
- Crisis support, including warming/cooling centers and during disaster response.

The Neighborhood Wellness Centers also include staffing of on-site community health workers (CHWs). These individuals support community members by helping to identify social determinants of health needs, such as food, transportation and housing, and linking them to resources to address those needs. Additionally, CHWs offer health counseling and education services and provide referrals to primary care providers, senior services and more.

Seven Neighborhood Wellness Centers are piloting substance use disorder prevention services, including access to naloxone and prevention education. This pilot is being funded through \$250,000 in opioid settlement dollars and offers free naloxone for pick-up to anyone in need, which will increase community access to the life-saving medicine.



Nate McCaughtry (pictured at far right), director, Center for Health and Community Impact at Wayne State University, provides a tour of the Vernon Center Neighborhood Wellness Center and information about the Community Health Worker Academy to (pictured l. to r.) Lt. Gov. Garlin Gilchrist II; Tommy Stallworth, MDHHS senior advisor; Dr. Phillip Levy, professor of emergency medicine and Wayne State's associate vice president of translational science; and Elizabeth Hertel, MDHHS director.

“We continue to address disparities by prioritizing the needs of vulnerable populations across the state and providing services where they are needed the most,” said Stallworth. “We are making sure equity is at the core of all decisions we make about allocating opioid settlement funds and these Neighborhood Wellness Centers are well-positioned to ensure life-saving measures, like naloxone, reach those most in need.”

The State of Michigan is expected to receive more than \$800 million over 18 years as part of the \$26 billion nationwide settlement with the three largest pharmaceutical distributors as well as opioid manufacturer Johnson and Johnson.

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[Neighborhood Wellness Centers flyer](#)