



OFFICE OF MAYOR ANDY SCHOR

124 W. Michigan Avenue – Ninth Floor
Lansing, MI 48933

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MEDIA CONTACT: Valerie Marchand
517-230-4904

Bloomberg Philanthropies, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and Ballmer Group Announce Lansing to Join New Initiative to Increase Economic Mobility

Lansing Will Use Data to Identify Barriers to Economic Opportunity for Residents, Test Promising Strategies, and Share Learnings with Other Communities

LANSING – Mayor Schor today announced that Bloomberg Philanthropies, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and Ballmer Group selected Lansing as one of ten American cities that will participate in a new national initiative to identify, pilot, and measure the success of interventions to accelerate economic mobility for their residents.

Over the next 18 months, Lansing will increase residents' access to a continuum of financial empowerment tools. This effort will be led by the nationally recognized City of Lansing Office of Financial Empowerment.

“Lansing has developed its Office of Financial Empowerment (OFE) to provide opportunities for economic mobility for our residents. OFE provides free one-on-one financial counseling for residents, collaborates with MSUFCU and the Lansing School District to provide the Lansing SAVE program, houses the Offenders Success Program for reentry citizens and advocates for access to safe, affordable banking products,” said Mayor Schor. “These services have increased residents’ savings, decreased their debt and have created pathways to financial success. This national initiative allows us to test and eventually scale solutions to continue to increase financial opportunities for Lansing residents. I am very proud of the work of OFE and we’re ready to expand our services even further.”

The defining characteristic of the American Dream is upward mobility, but new data from Opportunity Insights shows that the current generation’s chances of earning more than their parents are [declining](#). In many communities, young people and families [face significant barriers](#) to climbing the economic ladder based on the neighborhoods in which they live.

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The new national initiative, supported by Bloomberg Philanthropies, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and Ballmer Group, seeks to respond to the strong demand among local leaders for new, more effective interventions to address rising income inequality and declining economic mobility. In Bloomberg Philanthropies' [2018 American Mayors Survey](#) – the largest comprehensive public-opinion survey of mayors and city managers – one of their top concerns was the challenge of providing more and better economic opportunities for all residents.

Lansing was selected through a competitive process that looked at local commitment to addressing economic mobility, willingness to use data and evidence to accelerate progress, and ability to dedicate a team to accomplish the initiative's goals. The initiative is supported by a \$12 million investment from Bloomberg Philanthropies, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and Ballmer Group that was [announced](#) last fall. Over the next 18 months, Lansing will develop, pilot, and measure the early impacts of a Mobile Future Center, which streamlines several programs into one location for easier access, including Lansing SAVE, Lansing Promise and others. Lansing will also work closely with other cities participating in the initiative to share lessons and experiences to further advance the work and build a model for future collaboration among cities on the topic.

Lansing staff have already begun working with a team of advisors from [Results for America](#) and the [Behavioral Insights Team](#), both partners in [What Works Cities](#), a Bloomberg Philanthropies initiative that helps cities confront urgent challenges through data- and evidence-based decision-making. Lansing city staff will deepen their data skills and strengthen their ability to deliver results to residents with the help of experts from other What Works Cities partners, including [Johns Hopkins University's Center for Government Excellence](#), the [Harvard Kennedy School's Government Performance Lab](#) and the [Sunlight Foundation](#).

Additionally, [Opportunity Insights](#) at Harvard University is helping Lansing staff draw insights regarding economic mobility in the community using data from the [Opportunity Atlas](#), an interactive resource developed in collaboration with the U.S. Census Bureau.

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The ten cities participating in the economic mobility initiative are:

Albuquerque, NM; Cincinnati, OH; Dayton, OH; Detroit, MI; Lansing, MI; New Orleans, LA; Newark, NJ; Racine, WI; Rochester, NY; and Tulsa, OK.

About Bloomberg Philanthropies:

Bloomberg Philanthropies invests in 510 cities and 129 countries around the world to ensure better, longer lives for the greatest number of people. The organization focuses on five key areas for creating lasting change: Arts, Education, Environment, Government Innovation, and Public Health. Bloomberg Philanthropies encompasses all of Michael R. Bloomberg's giving, including his foundation and personal philanthropy as well as Bloomberg Associates, a pro bono consultancy that works in cities around the world. In 2018, Bloomberg Philanthropies distributed \$767 million. For more information, please visit bloomberg.org or follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#) and [Twitter](#).

About Ballmer Group:

Ballmer Group works to improve economic mobility for children and families in the United States who are disproportionately likely to remain in poverty. We believe that building pathways to opportunity requires broad, systemic change. We invest in many stages of a child's life by supporting strong community partnerships among public, private, and nonprofit organizations that use data to more effectively serve families. Ballmer Group was co-founded by philanthropist and civic activist Connie Ballmer and her husband Steve Ballmer, former CEO of Microsoft, founder of USAFacts, and chairman of the Los Angeles Clippers. Learn more at www.ballmergroup.org and on Twitter [@BallmerGroup](#).

About Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation:

Guided by the belief that every life has equal value, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation works to help all people lead healthy, productive lives. In developing countries, it focuses on improving people's health and giving them the chance to lift themselves out of hunger and extreme poverty. In the United States, it seeks to ensure that all people—especially those with the fewest resources—have access to the opportunities they need to succeed in school and life. Based in Seattle, Washington, the foundation is led by CEO Susan Desmond-Hellmann and Co-chair William H. Gates Sr., under the direction of Bill and Melinda Gates and Warren Buffett.