MSBF Project Grant Committee

Staff Recommendations

CONFIDENTIAL

June 2026

Disability Rights Michigan

Expanding Medicaid Impact Litigation & Advocacy

Amount Requested: $187,500

Amount Recommended: $187,500

Summary:

Disability Rights Michigan (DRM) is the independent, private, nonprofit, and nonpartisan protection and advocacy organization authorized by federal and state law to advocate for and protect the legal rights of people with disabilities in Michigan. DRM maintains a statewide intake and referral system, monitors and investigates instances of abuse/neglect in institutional settings, monitors and investigates Social Security representative payees, and brings class action and other systemic litigation to further the rights of Michiganders with disabilities.

Disability Rights Michigan requests funding to support a new attorney position focused on systemic Medicaid litigation and advocacy for individuals with disabilities. The project targets gaps in access to behavioral and mental health services and aims to expand statewide impact through litigation and policy reform. Several statewide organizations that serve individuals with disabilities wrote letters supporting this project.

Staff recommend funding. The project addresses a significant unmet need and leverages matching private funding for a defined, time-limited expansion of capacity.

Dispute Resolution Center of Washtenaw and Livingston Counties

Building Capacity for Restorative Justice Deflection and Diversion Programs with Legal Partners

Amount Requested: $75,000

Amount Recommended: $75,000

Summary:
The Dispute Resolution Center of Washtenaw & Livingston Counties (DRC) offers affordable, constructive, restorative and healing approaches to conflict resolution for the residents of Washtenaw and Livingston counties. The DRC was founded in 1983 and was the first pilot Community Dispute Resolution Program before the program was established statewide. Originally, the DRC only served residents of Ann Arbor but has gradually expanded Washtenaw and Livingston Counties over the last 25 years.

The Dispute Resolution Center, in partnership with other Michigan dispute resolution centers, requests funding to strengthen and expand restorative justice deflection and diversion programs. The project will support development of a structured volunteer management system, cross-center data evaluation, and a coordinated outreach campaign to build capacity for restorative justice services. These efforts aim to increase access to alternatives to traditional legal processes, improve program quality, and expand volunteer engagement across multiple counties. The grant funds a consultant for the project and staffing, and outreach costs for three dispute resolution centers.

Staff recommend funding. The project coordinates efforts between multiple dispute resolution centers to create larger impact.

Michigan Statewide Advocacy Services (MSAS)

Statewide Knowledge Base Project – Phase 1

Amount Requested: $247,425

Amount Recommended: Up to $247,425

Summary:
Michigan Statewide Advocacy Services (MSAS), an annual grantee of the Michigan State Bar Foundation, includes the Michigan Poverty Law Program, Michigan Legal Help, Michigan Elder Justice Initiative and the Michigan Immigrant Rights Center. MSAS serves low-income individuals and families as well as lawyers and other advocates in Michigan.

MSAS requests funding for the first phase of a statewide knowledge base project intended to improve how legal aid organizations access and share information. Currently, legal aid providers rely on multiple uncoordinated sources for legal guidance, templates, and practice materials, resulting in inefficiencies and inconsistencies. This phase will engage a consultant to assess existing resources, identify stakeholder needs, and develop a comprehensive design for a centralized, AI-enabled knowledge base. The project will lay the groundwork for a single, reliable source of up-to-date legal information to support legal aid attorneys and advocates statewide, ultimately improving the quality and efficiency of services delivered to low-income Michiganders.

MSBF, along with the Counsel and Advocacy Law Line and Michigan Legal Help, have worked with consultants for the past 18 months to assess the triage and referral system in Michigan. We are currently implementing the recommended changes to the triage and referral system. An additional recommendation was to create a shared knowledge base to support substantive work, intake, triage and referral. This project aligns with that recommendation.

Staff recommend funding. The proposal represents an innovative planning project with statewide impact. The grant covers the cost of a consultant and a portion of the director's time to work on this project.

Wayne State University – Center for Behavioral Health and Justice

Standardized AOT Eligibility Guidance Tool for Judges

Amount Requested: $78,000

Amount Recommended: $78,000

Summary:
The Center for Behavioral Health and Justice (CBHJ) is a center within the School of Social Work at Wayne State University. The CBHJ provides local communities, organizations, and behavioral health and law enforcement agencies across Michigan with expertise, evaluation, support, training, and technical assistance to optimize diversion of individuals from jail and prison through the implementation of best and innovative practices at every intercept of the criminal justice continuum.

The Wayne State University Center for Behavioral Health and Justice requests funding to pilot standardized decision-support tools designed to assist probate judges in determining eligibility for Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT). The project addresses inconsistency and potential bias in AOT decisions by providing structured guidance based on statutory criteria and expert input. Participating judges will use the tools during AOT hearings while data is collected to evaluate their effectiveness, accuracy, and usability. Findings will inform refinement and potential statewide implementation, with the goal of improving consistency, fairness, and transparency in judicial decision-making for individuals with serious mental illness.

Staff recommend funding. The proposal has strong support with potential for broader impact.

Resolution Services Center of Central Michigan
Scaling Up Mediation Services (SUMS)

Amount Requested: $78,000

Amount Recommended: $0

Summary:
The Resolution Services Center of Central Michigan (RSCCM) fosters peaceful, inclusive, and resilient communities by providing accessible and affordable conflict resolution services individuals, groups, organizations, and institutions across all sectors—public, private, and nonprofit. RSCCM provides services to individuals across various income levels by incorporating a sliding fee scale to ensure everyone has equitable access to constructive resolution.

Resolution Services Center of Central Michigan requests funding to expand access to mediation services as an alternative to traditional court processes. The proposed project would support increased outreach, expanded referrals, and the ability to reduce or waive fees for low- and moderate-income participants, allowing more individuals to access mediation services. The center aims to broaden the range and complexity of cases served, strengthen partnerships with courts and community organizations, and increase utilization of trained volunteer mediators. Anticipated outcomes include increased case volumes, reduced reliance on the court system, and improved access to timely, community-based conflict resolution services.

Staff does not recommend funding. The proposal primarily expands an ongoing service model rather than presenting a distinct, time-limited project.

SEMCA

License Recovery Project – Driving Privilege Reinstatement (DPR)

Amount Requested: $299,318

Amount Recommended: $0

Summary:

Southeast Michigan Community Alliance (SEMCA) oversees workforce and human services programs in Wayne and Monroe counties (excluding Detroit). SEMCA leads regional talent development efforts, partnering with community organizations to provide employment, training, and supportive services. SEMCA provides innovative leadership to build an inclusive, lifelong talent and career development system responsive to labor market and industry needs.

SEMCA has been operating a Driving Privilege Reinstatement (DPR) pilot program and is seeking funding because the funding for the pilot ended in April 2026. SEMCA has not identified alternative funding sources. They would like to transition the pilot program into a full-scale License Recovery Project serving low-income and justice-involved individuals in Wayne and Monroe counties. The project proposes to provide attorney-led legal services to help participants resolve outstanding traffic-related cases, clear warrants, negotiate fines, and restore suspended driver's licenses.

Staff does not recommend funding. The proposal seeks general operating funding to continue a pilot project, includes significant line items for client fees, does not include additional forms of revenue, and duplicates efforts.

Wayne State University Law School Clinic Program

Law and Policing: Community Outreach and Engagement

Amount Requested: $124,000

Amount Recommended: $0

Summary:

Wayne State University Law School requests funding to support a Community Outreach and Engagement Attorney who will lead a Detroit-focused initiative on law enforcement practices and policy engagement. For the past two years, Wayne State has worked with an ABA Post-Graduate Fellow in Legal Education and Police practices and they propose to have that fellow continue and focus on Detroit policing practices. The project's goal is to support more equitable policing practices and work on policy issues. Wayne State has not identified other funders.

Staff does not recommend funding. The proposal focuses on only one year of funding for a new position with no other sources of funding.