

DRAFT

**MINUTES OF THE MARCH 11, 2026
MEETING OF THE DIRECTORS OF THE
MICHIGAN STATE BAR FOUNDATION (MSBF)**

**DIRECTORS PRESENT AND
QUORUM**

The following Directors were present:

Richard K. Rappleye, Treasurer
Thomas R. Behm, Secretary
Heidi A. Alcock
Thomas W. Cranmer
Lisa J. Hamameh
Steven G. Howell
Hon. William B. Murphy
Michael L. Pitt
Lee B. Reimann
Robert F. Riley
Richard A. Soble
Jeffery V. Stuckey
Nicole M. Wotlinski

MSBF staff present:

Jennifer S. Bentley, Executive Director
Traci Thrana Kuiper, Chief Finance Officer
Liz Sempstrott, Executive Assistant
Mary Gladstone-Highland, Director of Grants

Present for only that part of the meeting related to their presentations were:

David Nielsen, Auditor, Maner Costerisan PC
David Brown, Senior Investment Consultant, Mercer
Bill Burns, Central Region Segment Lead, Mercer

CALL TO ORDER

Secretary Thomas Behm called the meeting to order at 4:02 p.m.

AUDIT REPORT

David Nielsen, auditor from Maner Costerisan, PC, reviewed the Foundation's audited Report on Financial Statements for the year ended September 30, 2025 (which included the Foundation's Schedule of Expense of Federal Awards) and the Auditor's governance letter.

Mr. Nielsen explained the Foundation has received the highest form of assurance as to financial statements provided by an auditing firm; the independent auditors' opinion is the Foundation's financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position, changes in net assets, and cash flows of the Michigan State Bar Foundation in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles. Included in his review were highlights of the Schedule of Expenditures of Federal Awards for the year ended September 30, 2025, primarily the opinion stating the Foundation has complied in all material aspects with the compliance requirements of its major federal program.

MOVED, SUPPORTED AND CARRIED TO ACCEPT THE AUDIT REPORT FOR YEAR ENDING SEPTEMBER 30, 2025 AS PRESENTED.

INVESTMENT REPORT

David Brown, senior investment consultant and Bill Burns, Central Region Segment Lead, from Mercer presented a 2025 market and economic recap, Michigan State Bar Foundation portfolio review through February 28, 2026, and expectations for the market going forward. Mr. Brown and Mr. Burns took time to answer questions from Board members.

MINUTES

MOVED, SUPPORTED AND CARRIED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 13, 2025 MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS.

PROJECT GRANT COMMITTEE

Robert F. Riley presented the Project Grants Committee summary recommending approval of the funding requests received as follows:

MOVED, SUPPORTED AND CARRIED TO APPROVE UP TO \$20,000 AOJ FUNDS TO THE CAN COUNCIL TO CONDUCT TRAINING AND DEVELOP A MULTIDISCIPLINARY TASKFORCE TO IDENTIFY AND SERVE VICTIMS OF COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN, WITH REIMBURSEMENT BASED ON ACTUAL COSTS OF THE TRAINING.

MOVED, SUPPORTED AND CARRIED TO DENY THE FUNDING REQUEST FROM LEGAL AID AND DEFENDER ASSOCIATION FOR THE VETERANS LEGAL CLINIC.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Treasurer, Richard Rappleye, reported that the Finance Audit Committee met with Dave Nielsen from Maner & Costerisan in a post-audit meeting to review the audited Report on Financial Statements for the year ended September 30, 2025. The FAC also reviewed the quarterly financial statements ending December 31, 2025.

MOVED, SUPPORTED, AND CARRIED TO ACCEPT THE UNAUDITED QUARTERLY FINANCIAL STATEMENTS ENDING DECEMBER 31, 2025.

MOVED, SUPPORTED AND CARRIED TO APPROVE TO AWARD AND EXECUTE GRANT FUNDS FROM THE MICHIGAN STATE BAR FOUNDATION RESERVE FUND TO THE FOLLOWING LEGAL AID PROGRAMS TO SUPPORT THE CONTINUED DELIVERY OF CIVIL LEGAL SERVICES BY PROGRAMS FACING 2026 LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION (LSC) FUNDING REDUCTIONS.

Organization	Recommended Award (Shortfall Request)
Michigan Indian Legal Services	\$9,522
Farmworker Legal Services	\$27,573
Michigan Advocacy Program	\$93,823
Legal Services of Northern Michigan	\$46,004
Legal Services of Eastern Michigan	\$87,116
Lakeshore Legal Aid	\$238,373
Legal Aid of Western Michigan	\$110,710
TOTAL Grants to Subrecipients	\$613,121

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Thomas Behm provided a brief report from the Executive Committee, including discussing the grant proposal from that National Association of Women Judges. The Executive Committee is following up with some questions and will make a decision.

Thomas Behm also presented recommendation from the Executive Committee regarding the Foundation’s 2026 awards.

MOVED, SUPPORTED AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED TO APPROVE JULIE FERSHTMAN. AS THE 2026 RECIPIENT OF THE FOUNDATION’S FOUNDER’S AWARD.

MOVED, SUPPORTED AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED TO APPROVE DAVID BLANCHARD AS THE RECIPIENT OF THE 2026 FOUNDATION’S ATJ AWARD.

REPORTS AND OTHER

Ms. Bentley highlighted some of the items in the Director’s Report. She provided an update on the new staff joining the Foundation and also recognized Celee Marchek’s retirement from the Foundation. She also gave the board a brief update on the Triage and Referral Project. She reviewed the IOLTA Compliance update chart.

Katie Pike summarized the 2025 ATJ Campaign Report provided in the materials.

NEW BUSINESS

No new business.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 5:35 p.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED

 Thomas R. Behm
 Secretary

MSBF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE DENIAL OF THE FOLLOWING ITEMS

MOVED, SUPPORTED AND CARRIED TO DENY THE GRANT REQUEST FROM THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN JUDGES

At the March Board Meeting there was a discussion about the grant request from the NAWJ. The EC followed up with NAWJ regarding questions and met on April 1st. The EC made the following decision:

MOVED, SUPPORTED AND CARRIED TO DENY THE GRANT REQUEST FROM THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN JUDGES

MSBF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE APPROVAL OF THE FOLLOWING ITEMS VIA EMAIL SENT ON 5/11/26

MOVED, SUPPORTED AND CARRIED TO APPROVE THE IOLTA DISBURSEMENT.

IOLTA Administrative Order 2021-3 indicates that 10% of the net proceeds of the Lawyer Trust Account Program shall be disbursed to support increased access to justice, including matters related to gender, racial and ethnic equality. In disbursing the funds, the Foundation shall consider and prioritize recommendations from the State Court Administrator.

SCAO has approved spending IOLTA funds on the following two JFA Commission projects that MSBF is leading:

1. Creation of Data Visualization platform to analysis triage and referral system -- \$50,000 contract
2. Implementation of new triage and referral system --- \$118,300 contract