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Bridge Michigan to Convene First Statewide Issues Summit Ahead of 2026 Election

Free, public convening will elevate the issues Michiganders say matter most — and inform the leaders who will be elected to address them

DETROIT, Mich. — April 23, 2026 — The Center for Michigan today announced that its newsroom, Bridge Michigan, will host the inaugural **Bridge Michigan Issues Summit** on October 21, 2026, at the Marygrove Conservancy in Detroit.

The half-day, statewide convening will bring together residents, civic leaders, policymakers, and subject-matter experts for in-depth, journalist-led conversations about the issues shaping Michigan's future. The Summit will take place just weeks before the November general election and is designed to elevate the priorities of Michigan residents at a critical moment for the state.

“This is about turning what we’re hearing from people across Michigan into a shared, public conversation at a moment when it matters most,” said Katy Locker, CEO of the Center for Michigan. “We’re creating a forum that helps voters understand the issues — and ensures those priorities carry forward beyond the election.”

Led by Bridge Michigan journalists, the Issues Summit will focus on the top concerns identified through the newsroom’s yearlong **Bridge Listens** initiative — including health care access and affordability, education, the environment and water, and economic opportunity and cost of living. The program will feature expert panels, reporting-based context, and opportunities for audience engagement, all grounded in Bridge Michigan’s nonpartisan journalism.

“This Summit is rooted in our reporting and in what we’ve heard directly from people across Michigan,” said Kathy Kieliszewski, Executive Editor of Innovation at Bridge Michigan. “Through Bridge Listens, we’re not guessing at what matters — we’re documenting it. Our role as journalists is to bring clarity, context, and accountability to those issues, and to create a space where they can be examined seriously.”

The Summit will be emceed by Devin Scillian, former WDIV Channel 4 anchor and a member of the Center for Michigan’s board of directors.

The event will be free and open to the public, with both in-person attendance at Marygrove Conservancy and a livestream available statewide. A full recording will be published following the event to ensure broad access.

Registration will open later this summer. Individuals can sign up now at bridgemi.com/bridge-listens-issues-summit for early access to registration and to receive announcements about speakers, program details, and participation opportunities.

The Bridge Michigan Issues Summit represents the culmination of [Bridge Listens](#), a yearlong effort to connect statewide community input directly to journalism and public engagement. Insights gathered through surveys, community conversations, and events are shaping both newsroom coverage and the Summit program — creating a direct link between what Michiganders say matters and how those issues are explored publicly.

“The Center for Michigan exists to strengthen informed civic life in this state,” said Paul Hillegonds, board chair of the Center for Michigan. “Launching an annual Issues Summit is a natural extension of that mission — creating a durable forum where the most important challenges facing Michigan can be examined in a serious, public way.”

The October event is launching a new annual statewide forum — a consistent, nonpartisan space for examining the issues facing Michigan and strengthening informed public dialogue. Early philanthropic support for the Issues Summit has been provided by the Power Foundation, the Joyce Foundation and the Skillman Foundation. Sponsorship opportunities remain available. Organizations interested in supporting the Issues Summit can contact Emma Carr at ecarr@centerformichigan.org or request the sponsorship packet.

Additional speakers and program details will be announced in the coming months.

About the Center for Michigan

The Center for Michigan is a nonprofit organization dedicated to making Michigan better through high-quality, nonpartisan journalism and engagement. Its publications, Bridge Michigan and BridgeDetroit, serve communities across the state with reporting that informs, connects, and engages residents on the issues that matter most.

Bridge Michigan reaches more than 3.9 million readers annually and connects directly with more than 100,000 newsletter subscribers statewide, making it one of the largest nonprofit news audiences in the Midwest. Through initiatives like Bridge Listens, the organization is building new ways to connect journalism to the people it serves — and to strengthen informed civic participation across Michigan.

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