To our fellow Detroiters,

In 2015, the Detroit Drives Degrees Leadership Council set two ambitious goals for our region: 1) increase the number of residents with a postsecondary credential or degree to 60% by 2030 and 2) close the racial equity gap by half in that same time period. Now, we are formalizing these goals into the Detroit Regional Talent Compact, a collective commitment among educational institutions, businesses, philanthropy, and nonprofits to break down barriers to postsecondary educational attainment.

We are proud of the progress made to date. Since setting our goals, we have increased postsecondary attainment by more than three percentage points; received national recognition through designation as a Talent Hub; and our goal was reinforced by Gov. Whitmer’s commitment to the same 60% goal for the state of Michigan.

Despite our steps forward, this work could not come at a more critical time. Fewer than half of Detroit’s residents hold a postsecondary degree or high-quality credential, but the vast majority—about 88%—of jobs that offer a family sustaining wage in the region require education beyond high school. Economic fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic will put an even greater strain on the Detroit’s economy and talent pipeline. Historical data from the Great Recession suggests that a region’s economic recovery is directly linked to its postsecondary attainment rate.

There is still a long way to reach our goals. In 2019, the Detroit Regional Chamber released its inaugural State of Education report that showed leaks in the education pipeline exist at all stages of the education continuum. Of 100 Detroit students who start in the 9th grade, only 57 will go on to enroll in college within 12 months of graduating high school, and only 30 will ultimately earn a postsecondary credential in six years. When disaggregated by race or ethnicity, these disparities are even greater, with Black students completing credentials at half the rates of their White and Asian peers.

If we do not take aggressive action, Detroit will not meet the goals we set five years ago. New analyses conducted for the Chamber in 2020 indicate that, despite good progress over the last few years, Detroit’s current trajectory leaves the region six percentage points short of our 60 percent goal in 2030. Further, if the region is going to reduce equity gaps by half, more than 90,000 Black and 15,000 Latinx students will need to earn degrees in the next decade. While Black and Latinx people make up about 27% of the total population in the region, these figures comprise 40% of total credentials needed to meet the overall attainment goal, meaning a disproportionate number of credentials must be awarded to Black and Latinx students in order to achieve both goals.

Altering our trajectory will take a coordinated effort across the region. For this reason, we have developed a Regional Master Plan to lay out a roadmap for the next 10 years. Recognizing the magnitude of change that is needed to meet our goals and that no single institution or organization can tackle it alone, the Detroit Drives Degrees Leadership Council is asking leaders in the region to commit to specific strategies and actions laid out in the regional masterplan, which will serve as the guidepost for the organizational action plans developed as part of the Talent Compact.

As the signatories of the Detroit Regional Talent Compact, we endorse the strategies laid out in this plan and are dedicated to seeing the work through to 2030. We will hold one another accountable to implementing the strategies outlined in the regional master plan, and to driving institutional change through our organizational action plans. And we invite you – as fellow business, education, and community leaders – to join us in the ambitious task of working collectively and systemically to increase our region’s postsecondary attainment and reduce our equity gaps.
Co-Chairs, Detroit Drives Degrees Leadership Council

Dick Rassel
Chairman
Butzel Long

Ora Pescovitz
President
Oakland University

Business Signatories

Jamie Jacob
CEO
Ajax Paving

Patti Poppe
President & CEO
Consumers Energy

Sandy Baruah
President & CEO
Detroit Regional Chamber

Paul Glantz
Founder & Chairman
Emagine Entertainment

Bob Riney
President, Healthcare Operations & Chief Operating Officer
Henry Ford Health System

Peter Quigley
President & CEO
Kelly

KimArie Yowell
Chief Learning Officer
Quicken Loans
K-12 and Higher Education Signatories

Ralph Bland
Founder & President, New Paradigm for Education
Detroit Charter High School Collaborative

Danielle Jackson
CEO, Detroit 90/90
Detroit Charter High School Collaborative

Nikolai Vitti
Superintendent
Detroit Public Schools Community

James Smith
President
Eastern Michigan University

Russell Kavalhuna
President
Henry Ford College

James Sawyer
President
Macomb Community College

Michael DeVault
Superintendent
Macomb Intermediate School District

Peter Provenzano
Chancellor
Oakland Community College

Wanda Cook-Robinson
Superintendent
Oakland Schools

Domenico Grasso
Chancellor
University of Michigan- Dearborn
Curtis Ivery
Chancellor
Wayne County Community College

Randy Liepa
Superintendent
Wayne RESA

M. Roy Wilson
President
Wayne State University

Jeff Donofrio
Director, Labor and Economic Opportunity
State of Michigan

Daniel Hurley
CEO
Michigan Association of State Universities

Michael Hansen
President
Michigan Community College Association

Gilda Jacobs
President & CEO
Michigan League for Public Policy

Nicole Sherard-Freeman
Executive Director, Workforce Development
City of Detroit

Anita Martinez
Executive Director
Michigan Hispanic Collaborative
Jack Elsey  
Executive Director  
Detroit Children’s Fund

Darienne Driver Hudson  
President & CEO  
United Way for Southeastern Michigan

Kylee Mitchell Wells  
Executive Director  
Ballmer Group

Megan Fenkell  
Executive Director  
Jamie and Denise Jacob Family

Ashley Johnson  
Executive Director  
Detroit College Access Network

Lavea Brachman  
Vice President of Programs  
Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation

Ryan Fewins-Bliss  
Executive Director  
Michigan College Access Network

William Moses  
Managing Director, Education  
The Kresge Foundation

Tonya Allen  
CEO  
Skillman Foundation