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“Taxpayers deserve to know if funding the Reconnect program has produced the results the governor promised.”

Does Michigan Reconnect get people better paying jobs?

We don't know, but Whitmer wants to expand the program anyway

By James M. Hohman and Molly Macek | January 2026

At the Detroit Auto Show, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer called on the Legislature to expand the Michigan Reconnect program, which covers the cost of community college for eligible participants. “They might be changing careers, looking to make more money or pursuing a lifelong dream. No matter the reason, I’m really proud of every Reconnector for betting on themselves,” Whitmer said.

It doesn't look like anyone in state government is trying to figure out whether those bets paid off.

The Reconnect program is supposed to help participants gain credentials in order to get higher paying jobs. Yet lawmakers and administrators do not ask for information on the program's results, which would tell us whether it actually generates higher earnings for participants.

Community colleges file annual reports with the state over the program. The schools are not asked about whether their Reconnect students get better paying jobs. They are, however, asked about the college's “commitment to equity and the closure of institutional performance gaps by race/ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, or first-generation status.”

The state compiles information about participants in a dashboard. It shows that there have been 123,193 Reconnect recipients so far, and those participants have earned 13,167 degrees. Some may still be working toward their degrees, but only 11% of participants have earned their credentials.

What is their success rate of turning participants into credentials and those credentials into good paying jobs? Don't look for answers on the dashboard.

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State leaders have the responsibility to evaluate programs like Reconnect that are funded by taxpayer dollars. Otherwise, there's no way to know if more money leads to the results the program set out to produce.

But if job attainment or earnings after graduation aren't reported, how is the state measuring the program's success?

It seems the state is confusing the metrics that should be used to evaluate the program. It's assuming that more money invested and students enrolled in the program equals success. If this were the case, one would expect the graduation rate to be greater than 11%.

To be fair, the dashboard does include credits earned and retention rates that measure the success of Reconnect participants while they're enrolled. In 2023, 23% of Reconnecters dropped out of the program. Nearly two-thirds were retained.

But year-to-year retention numbers and credits earned aren't enough to know if the program is working. Knowing what graduates do with those credits – and how much they earn in their new careers – is most important for evaluating Reconnect's success. Otherwise, taxpayers won't

know if their dollars are helping the program achieve its goal.

The state ought to collect data on job attainment and earnings after graduation. Taxpayers deserve to know if funding the Reconnect program has produced the results the governor promised. And lawmakers should hold off on spending any more on Reconnect until there are answers to basic questions about its performance.

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James M. Hohman is director of fiscal policy for the Mackinac Center for Public Policy.



Molly Macek is director of educational policy for the Mackinac Center for Public Policy.

