

The Governor's Office of FOUNDATION LIAISON

A partnership between the
State of Michigan and the
Council of Michigan Foundations

Connecting Government and Philanthropy to Improve the Health of Michigan's Families

Michigan's nonpartisan Office of Foundation Liaison (OFL) was created in 2003 at the suggestion of Michigan philanthropic leaders. The Office — the first of its kind in the nation — works to foster partnerships between state government agencies and philanthropic organizations that are likely to result in policy and programmatic reforms to improve the lives of children and families in Michigan. Since its inception, OFL has brokered more than \$150 million in foundation investments for initiatives to increase Michigan's economic competitiveness through reforms in P-20 education, economic and workforce development, health, and land use.

OFL works in three priority issue areas: prenatal to postsecondary education, workforce development, and health. Within health, OFL has made great strides in connecting government and philanthropy to expand access to necessary health resources for Michigan's most vulnerable populations.

Supporting Seniors' Access to Clean Water in Flint

During the Flint Water Crisis, as Flint families received clean, bottled water, many Flint seniors continued to use lead-contaminated tap water for cooking and drinking. Without accessible transportation, many seniors had bottled water delivered to their doorstep. Unfortunately, they were often unable to haul the water containers into their homes. Even if they did manage to succeed in carrying the heavy load indoors, they struggled to open the bottles, leaving them with no choice but to continue using tainted water for their daily needs.

When this clean water access issue came to OFL's attention, OFL went straight to work bringing partners together to develop a solution for Flint's seniors. Through OFL's expert facilitation, AARP Michigan, Valley Area Agency on Aging,

and the Michigan Health Endowment Fund came together to ramp up food and water delivery to Flint seniors, provide them with rubber grips so that they could open and use the delivered bottled water, and conduct a needs assessment study.

OFL also worked with the Valley Area Agency on Aging to utilize the well-known local Meals on Wheels program to deliver food and water at the same time. This ensured that seniors felt safe and did not need to struggle with the heavy water containers. By using its staff expertise, official governor-backed position, and expansive relationship network, OFL enabled partners to come together and ensure Flint's vulnerable senior population gained access to fresh, clean water throughout the Flint Water Crisis.

OFL's Key Roles in Helping Flint Seniors Access Clean Water

- Expertly facilitating connections between the public and private sectors to ramp up food and water delivery into senior's homes
- Coordinating efforts with partners to find creative clean water access solutions for Flint's seniors