

## **Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure: Member Day Hearing Written Testimony of Rep. Brenda L. Lawrence (MI-14)**

Chairman DeFazio, Ranking Member Graves, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today regarding the paramount need to invest in our nation's infrastructure.

I am grateful for the Committee's leadership on this issue and for advancing a critically important conversation about how we can move forward with surface transportation authorization and promote robust investment in our infrastructure.

As a former Mayor, I understand that investing in our nation's infrastructure is not only critical to our economy, but also to our nation's recovery.

One of my top priorities in the 117th Congress is to "fix the damn roads," a pointedly accurate statement championed by Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer.

Michigan's infrastructure is critical for our economic progress, yet because of underinvestments in our roads and bridges, drivers are burdened with vehicle repair costs and small businesses suffer due to a loss in productivity.

According to a 2019 report from the Transportation Asset Management Council, 39 and 40 percent of major state roads in Michigan were rated in poor and fair condition, respectively, while only 21 percent were considered to be in good condition.

Similarly, in the American Society of Civil Engineers' 2018 report card, Michigan received an overall grade of D+, which described our systems as "old and outdated," illustrating the severity of Michigan's infrastructure challenges. Michigan is not alone in that struggle—we need a comprehensive investment in our nation's infrastructure.

With the economic downturn caused by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, investing in infrastructure and good paying jobs are more imperative to my home state and our country's economic development than ever before.

As the Chairman rightfully stated during the March 25, 2021 Committee hearing with Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg: "We know that in this pivotal time, it's not just how much we invest, but how we invest these funds that will determine whether an infrastructure bill moves our nation in the right direction."

We move our nation in the right direction by ensuring that the infrastructure package is inclusive.

This means ensuring women and communities of color are represented in the infrastructure workforce, and we work to remove any and all barriers to their participation.

In 2018, women made up nearly 47 percent of the U.S. workforce, but only account for 15 percent of the U.S. transportation industry workforce.

We must change this.

One of the ways we can do this is by expanding women's participation in apprenticeship programs and other job training programs.

We must also provide supportive services to make it easier to participate in job training and apprenticeship programs, such as pre-apprenticeship, child care, transportation vouchers, tools, work wear, and retention services.

I want to commend the Biden Administration for recognizing the need to strengthen our workforce as well, including investments in social infrastructure. Let me be clear about one thing: social infrastructure is infrastructure and it is critical to our overall competitiveness.

I share the Chairman's goals to build on H.R. 2, the *Moving Forward Act*, and how those priorities overlap with the Administration's goals to Build Back Better.

But we must be able to Build Back Better with women included as part of this recovery and jobs package.

As the proud Representative of the Motor City, I stand ready to work with Members of this Committee in a bipartisan manner to rebuild our crumbling infrastructure and move our nation forward.

I want to thank the Chairman and Ranking Member for providing me an opportunity to testify before you today, and I yield back.