

THE RIGHT TO A PRIVATE & INDEPENDENT BALLOT:

Polling Place Accessibility for Michigan Voters with Disabilities during the 2025 Elections



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Prepared by



The Right to a Private and Independent Ballot: Polling Place Accessibility for Michigan Voters with Disabilities during the 2025 Elections

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Detroit Disability Power works to build the political power of the disability community and to end disparities disabled people face in regards to housing, employment, education, transportation, healthcare, voting and more. We are a diverse community coming together across visible and hidden disabilities, race, ethnicity, age, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, citizenship and economic status to ensure full inclusion of people with disabilities in Detroit and beyond.

Detroit Disability Power is a project fiscally sponsored by Michigan Disability Rights Coalition.

Cover image: Original Artwork by Veronica Thomas



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A Note on Terminology

This report uses three terms that may appear interchangeable but carry distinct meanings throughout this document:

- **Polling place** — Any location designated for in-person voting, whether during early voting or on Election Day. This is the broadest term and encompasses both of the categories below.
- **Voting site** — A location designated specifically for casting a ballot during the early voting period.
- **Polling location** — A location designated specifically for casting a ballot on Election Day.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Michigan law and federal law are clear: every voter deserves equal access to the polls. Yet in 2025, Detroit Disability Power (DDP) found that **only 10% of the 415 Election Day polling locations we assessed met basic accessibility standards**, a number that has declined every year since our audits began.

In 2025, DDP conducted accessibility audits at 447 polling places (415 Election Day polling locations and 32 early voting sites) across 45 jurisdictions in seven counties during three elections: the May 6 Special Consolidated Election, the August 5 Primary Election, and the November 4 General Election. These jurisdictions serve more than 1.5 million adult Michiganders (just under 15% of the state's population). We assessed each site against four legally required criteria: accessible parking and a clear pathway, an accessible entrance, a fully functional Voter Assist Terminal (VAT), and a properly set-up wheelchair-height voting booth for marking a paper ballot privately and independently.

Only 41 of the 415 Election Day polling locations observed, 10%, met all four criteria. This is a decline from 13% in 2024 and 16% in 2022. The VAT remained the most common barrier: only 36% of polling locations had a fully accessible VAT, down sharply from 62% in 2024. Of the remaining 374 inaccessible polling locations, 93 (22% of all locations observed) failed on only one of the four measures. These barriers are fixable. If those single-barrier locations were remediated, the share of fully accessible polling locations would more than triple, to 32%.

These findings reflect two persistent, structural problems. First, local clerks, who bear primary responsibility for polling place accessibility, are not receiving adequate funding, training, or state-level support to meet their obligations. Second, Michigan's highly decentralized election system, with over 1,500 jurisdictions each responsible for their own administration, produces wide variation in poll worker training, site preparation, and equipment setup. The result is that a voter's experience depends heavily on where they live, an outcome that is incompatible with the equal protection guarantees that underpin the right to vote.

To address these findings, this report calls on Michigan's election and government officials to take the following actions:

- **Quick fixes available now:** Clearly mark accessible parking spaces and pathways; remove obstructions from accessible routes and entrances; ensure VAT headphones, controllers, and wheelchair-height booths are set up and ready before polls open.
- **Training:** Standardize poll worker training statewide on VAT operation, accessible booth setup, and voter rights; require hands-on practice elections as part of training.
- **Funding:** Allocate dedicated state funding to county and local clerks for accessibility improvements, including both infrastructure upgrades and training.
- **Legislation:** Require jurisdictions to report VAT usage to the Michigan Department of State, creating the accountability infrastructure needed to track progress and identify where additional support is needed.

This report was produced by Detroit Disability Power with support from The Carter Center.



INTRODUCTION

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), one in four U.S. adults has a disability.¹ As defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), a person with a disability is someone who "[has] a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activiti[es]."² Disabilities may affect a person's vision, movement, thinking, memory, learning, communication, hearing, mental health, and social relationships.³ The disability community is diverse and encompasses many diagnoses and lived experiences. Disabilities can be apparent or non-apparent; remitting and relapsing; progressive or constant; temporary or permanent; something a person is born with or something they acquire during their lifetime. People with the same disabilities can have different experiences and needs.

The Legal Framework for Accessible Elections

In Michigan, the home state of DDP, over 2.3 million voting-age people - 29% - have a disability.⁴ Voters with disabilities in Michigan, and across the country, have a legally guaranteed right to cast their ballots privately and independently. Three federal laws define this right and the standards polling places must meet to honor it.

The **Voting Rights Act of 1965 (VRA)** prohibits conditioning the right to vote on literacy tests or educational attainment, protections essential for voters with cognitive or learning disabilities. It also requires election officials to allow voters with disabilities to receive assistance from a person of their choice.^{5, 6}

The **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**, passed in 1990, prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities by state and local governments of all sizes. Title II of the ADA requires government entities to give people with disabilities equal access to their programs, services, and activities, including voting. Election officials are

¹ Center for Disease Control and Prevention. (2024, July 15). Disability Impacts All of Us Infographic. Retrieved April 21, 2025, from <https://www.cdc.gov/disability-and-health/articles-documents/disability-impacts-all-of-us-infographic.html>

² ADA National Network. (2025). *What is the definition of disability under the ADA?* Retrieved April 21, 2025, from <https://adata.org/faq/what-definition-disability-under-ada>

³ Center for Disease Control and Prevention. (2025, April 2). Disability and Health Overview. Disability and Health. Retrieved April 21, 2025, from <https://www.cdc.gov/disability-and-health/about/>

⁴ Tian, Y., McKane, P., Lee, C., Frame, A., & Wimberley, R. (2021). Disability and Race/Ethnicity among Michigan Adults. Michigan BRFSS Surveillance Brief. Vol. 12, No. 1. Lansing, MI: Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, Lifecourse Epidemiology and Genomics Division, March 2021.

⁵ "Section 2 Of The Voting Rights Act," (2023, April 5). <https://www.justice.gov/crt/section-2-voting-rights-act>.

⁶ Cornell Law School. (2022). "Voting assistance for blind, disabled, or illiterate person," in *52 USC §§ Code § 10508*

required to evaluate polling places for ADA compliance, and the U.S. Department of Justice has published an ADA Checklist for Polling Places to help them do so.^{7, 8, 9} Where a facility cannot be made accessible, officials must select an alternative location or provide an alternative voting method. Detroit Disability Power does not support closing polling places to resolve accessibility concerns, as some jurisdictions have used inaccessibility as a pretext for closures that suppress voter participation.¹⁰ The goal should always be to improve access, not eliminate it.

The Help America Vote Act (HAVA), signed into law in 2002, requires every polling place in a federal election to have at least one accessible voting system, a system that allows voters with disabilities to cast their ballots privately and independently, including nonvisual access for voters who are blind or have low vision.¹¹ Michigan law extends this requirement to non-federal elections as well. In Michigan, this accessible voting system is called the Voter Assist Terminal (VAT), and we use that term throughout this report.^{12, 13}

Despite these legal requirements, the ADA is widely understood as an unfunded mandate: state and local governments may lack the resources and expertise needed to bring infrastructure and practices into compliance.¹⁴ This gap between legal obligation and operational reality is a central theme of this report.

⁷ U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, *State and Local Governments* (n.d.), <https://www.ada.gov/topics/title-ii/>

⁸ U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division. (2006) "ADA Coordinator, Notice & Grievance Procedure" Retrieved April 21, 2025, from <https://archive.ada.gov/pcatoolkit/chap2toolkit.htm>.

⁹ U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division. (2016). "ADA Checklist for Polling Places. Retrieved April 21, 2025, from <https://archive.ada.gov/votingchecklist.htm>.

¹⁰ National Disability Rights Network. (2020, January 30). *Election Officials Misusing the ADA to Close Polling Places*. <https://www.ndrn.org/resource/election-officials-misusing-the-ada-to-close-polling-places/>

¹¹ Mills, Kim I (1995, February 27).. "Disabilities Act: An 'Unfunded Mandate' Too Potent To Oppose." *AP NEWS*.

¹² Mich. Comp. Laws § 168.662 (2022) Michigan Legislature, "Section 168.622"

¹³ Mich. Comp. Laws § 168.662 (2022) Michigan Legislature, "Section 168.622"

¹⁴ Michigan Legislature, "Section 168.622" in *Michigan Election Law (Excerpt) Act 116 of 1954* (n.d.), <http://legislature.mi.gov/doc.aspx?mcl-168-662>

Polling Place Access and Election Administration in Michigan

The accessibility barriers documented in this report are not unique to Michigan. A 2016 U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) study observed 178 polling places across the country and found that 60% had one or more potential impediments outside the building. Of the locations where the GAO team could fully assess both the exterior and interior, only 17% had no potential impediments. At the voting stations themselves, 65% did not ensure full access.¹⁵ Research by Dr. Lisa Schur and Dr. Douglas Kruse at Rutgers University, conducted in partnership with the U.S. Election Assistance Commission, found that disabled voters were three times more likely than nondisabled voters to report difficulties voting in 2024.¹⁶ According to a 2024 U.S. Vote Foundation analysis, if disabled voters turned out at the same rate as nondisabled voters, approximately two million more people would participate in our democracy.¹⁷

Michigan presents a particularly complex environment for ensuring consistent accessibility. With 83 counties, 280 cities, and 1,240 townships, Michigan has more election jurisdictions than almost any other state (over 15% of all jurisdictions in the country).¹⁸ Each jurisdiction is led by a clerk who selects polling locations, trains poll workers, and is responsible for ensuring accessibility. However, clerks typically operate on departmental budgets that do not include funding for capital improvements. Many lack the knowledge or resources to budget for accessibility upgrades, and there is no state-level mechanism to ensure consistent training or support. The result is significant variation in accessibility from one jurisdiction to the next, and in many cases no funding available at all.

Most Michigan polling places are located in government buildings, schools, libraries, or places of worship, facilities used primarily for other purposes and often without dedicated accommodations for voters with disabilities.¹⁹ Although Michigan recently expanded the list of facilities eligible to serve as polling locations, suitable accessible options remain limited in some communities.

¹⁵ General Accounting Office. (2017). *Voters with Disabilities: Observations on Polling Place Accessibility and Related Federal Guidance*. <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-18-4.pdf>

¹⁶ Schur, L., & Kruse, D. (2024). *Voting Experiences Since HAVA: Perspectives of People with Disabilities*. https://www.eac.gov/sites/default/files/2024-04/EAC_2024_Rutgers_Report_PDF.pdf.

¹⁷ U.S. Vote Foundation. 2024 Turnout Gap for Voters with Disabilities. Retrieved February 26, 2026, from <https://www.usvotefoundation.org/closing-gap-voters-disabilities-updated-2024>

¹⁸ Michigan Department of State. (2023). *Michigan's Elections System Structure Overview*. <https://www.michigan.gov/sos/-/media/Project/Websites/sos/Elections/Voter-Education/Michigans-Elections-System-Structure-Overview.pdf>

¹⁹ U.S. Census Bureau, "U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts." <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/MI/>

Assessing Voter Accessibility through Access Audits

Detroit Disability Power began informally auditing polling place accessibility in 2018. In 2022, DDP formalized its audit program in partnership with The Carter Center, systematically observing 261 polling locations across Metro Detroit during the November election. That audit found that only 16% of polling locations were fully accessible. In 2024, DDP expanded its coverage to 294 Election Day polling locations and 41 early voting sites in 21 jurisdictions, finding that only 13% of Election Day locations were fully accessible. In 2025, DDP expanded further, to 415 Election Day polling locations and 32 early voting sites across 45 jurisdictions spanning seven counties, assessing sites during three separate elections.

DDP has also built this work into a national effort through the National Polling Access Audit Coalition, a partnership with other organizations focused on training voting rights advocates across the country to evaluate and improve polling place accessibility in their own communities.

The sections that follow describe the methodology used in the 2025 audits, present the findings in detail, and offer specific recommendations for the election officials, legislators, and government entities responsible for ensuring that every voter, regardless of disability, can exercise their right to vote.

OBSERVING POLLING PLACE ACCESSIBILITY

In 2025, DDP recruited, trained, and deployed 34 volunteers to visit 447 total polling places during the May Special Election, August Primary Election, and November General Election. Three observers conducted audits during the May Special Election, 16 observers conducted audits during the August Primary, and 15 observers conducted audits during the November General Election. Observers were trained by DDP's Advocacy Director and DDP's Voting Access and Election Protection Fellow on the audit questionnaire and the possible answers to each question, as well as what they should be looking for at each location.

In order to ensure observers could fully complete the audit questionnaire, DDP obtained authorization from the county clerk in each county where audits were conducted to issue election challenger credentials. Under Michigan law, election challengers are allowed more freedom to move around a polling place than poll watchers, who must remain in designated public viewing areas. Challenger credentials were issued to each observer to help ensure they would be able to document all accessibility items included in the audit questionnaire. The previously mentioned training included sections on the rights and responsibilities of challengers.

The observations were primarily centered on the city of Detroit, the state's single largest jurisdiction, along with other municipalities in the metro area and some additional rural communities. This region is home to approximately 5 million people, slightly over half of Michigan's total population of approximately 10 million.²⁰ Geographically contiguous jurisdictions allowed the observation team to assign volunteers to areas that crossed municipal or county borders when practical. The team also selected jurisdictions that include diverse demographic characteristics, including race/ethnicity, income, language, and culture.

²⁰ U.S. Census Bureau, "U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts." <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/MI/>

Previously in 2022 and 2024, our observation team had been concentrated in three counties: Macomb, Oakland, and Wayne. In 2025, the observation team expanded coverage to include Bay, Genesee and Saginaw Counties (all located north of Oakland County along the I-75 corridor), along with Washtenaw County (located west of Wayne County). All jurisdictions were located within a single county, with the exception of Northville which crosses the county line between Oakland and Wayne County. The full list of jurisdictions separated by county can be found in Table 1.

Table 1: Audit Jurisdictions by County

County	Jurisdictions
Bay	Essexville Hampton Township Merritt Township
Genesee	Montrose Montrose Township Vienna Charter Township
Oakland	Auburn Hills Berkeley Clawson Farmington Hazel Park Lathrup Village Madison Heights Northville Novi Pleasant Ridge Pontiac Rochester Rochester Hills Southfield Troy
Macomb	Clinton Township Harrison Township Mount Clemens New Baltimore Sterling Heights

County	Jurisdictions
Saginaw	Birch Run Township Blumfield Township Buena Vista Charter Township Maple Grove Township Taymouth Township
Washtenaw	Ann Arbor
Wayne	Dearborn Dearborn Heights Detroit Ecorse Hamtramck Harper Woods Livonia Northville Plymouth Southgate Taylor Wayne

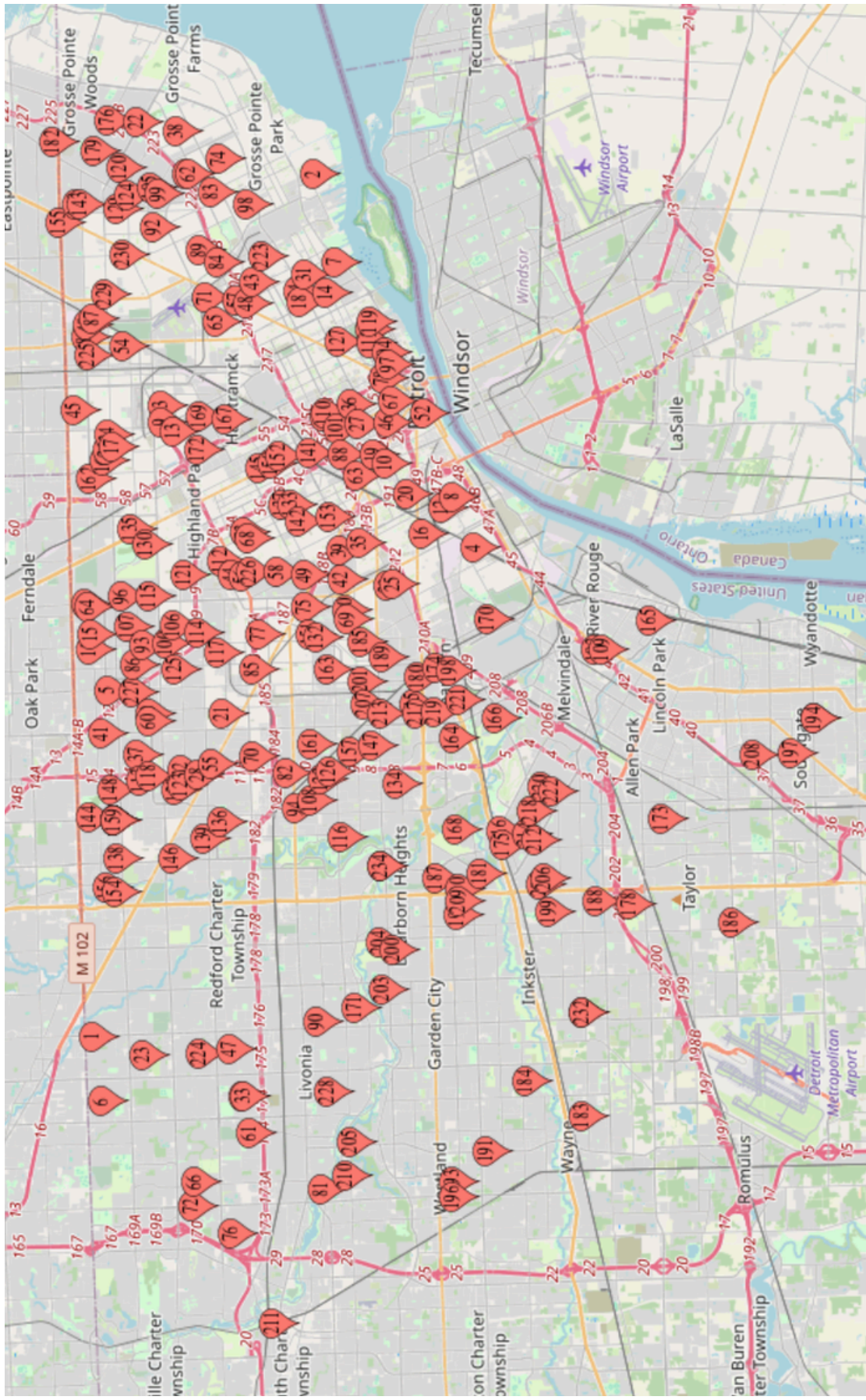
Nearly half a million disabled adults live in the jurisdictions where audits were conducted, representing nearly 32% of the voting-age people in those communities.²¹ Appendix A provides additional details about disability statistics in Michigan along with each of the counties and jurisdictions audited during 2025.

The maps on the following pages provide a visual representation of the geographic area and relative location of polling locations visited during the 2025 audit program.

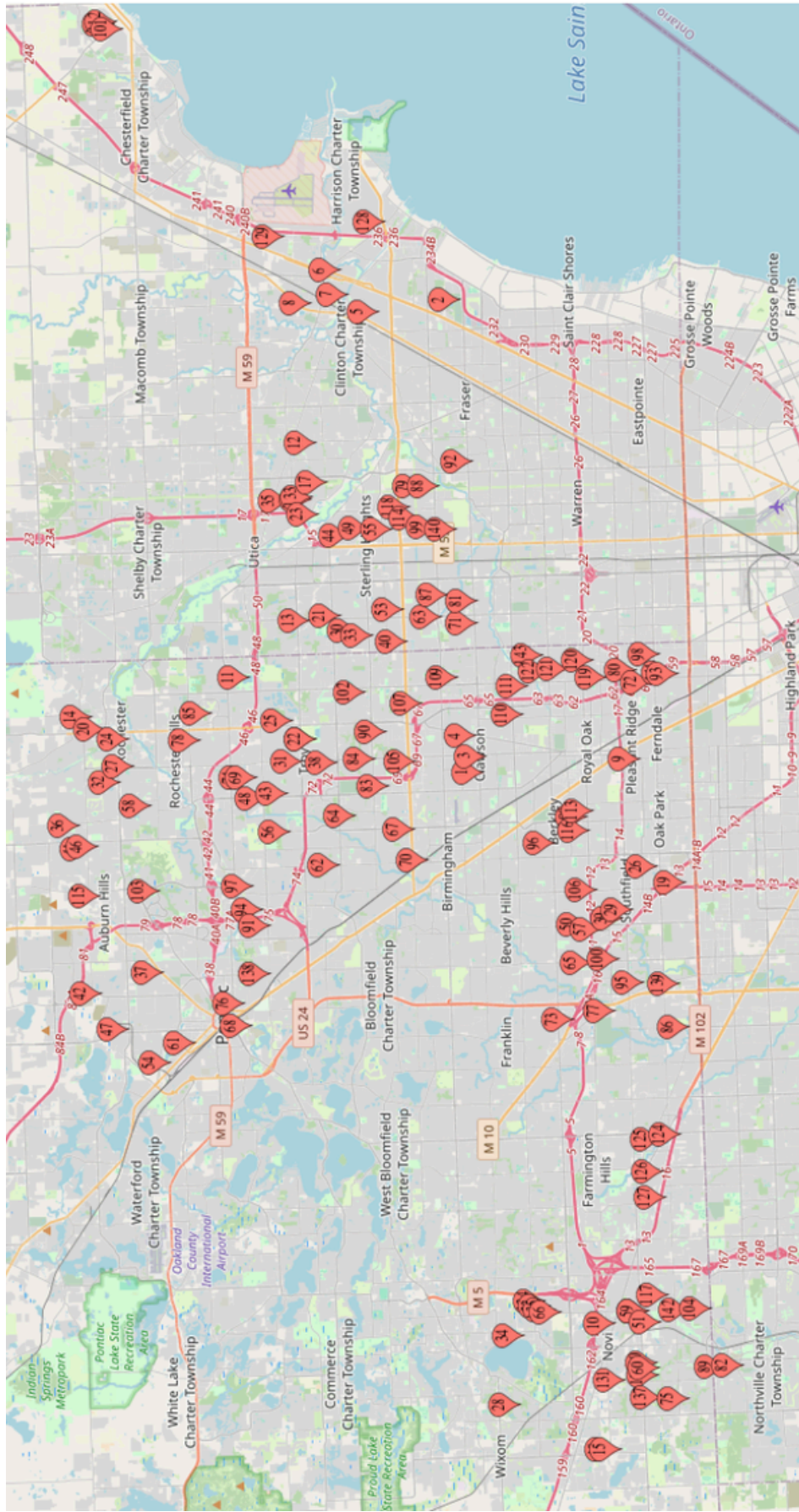
Volunteer observers visited polling places during early voting and on Election Day. Observers visited 32 early voting sites separate from Election Day observations. In cases where an early voting site also served as an Election Day polling location, the site was visited both during the early voting period and on Election Day. Separate visits ensured that the site was accurately analyzed in both the early voting and Election Day data based on the conditions observed during those times in case there were changes to the location that impacted accessibility between the two separate voting periods.

²¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. PLACES: Local Data for Better Health, Place Data, 2025 Release. Accessed March 12, 2026. <https://www.cdc.gov/places>.

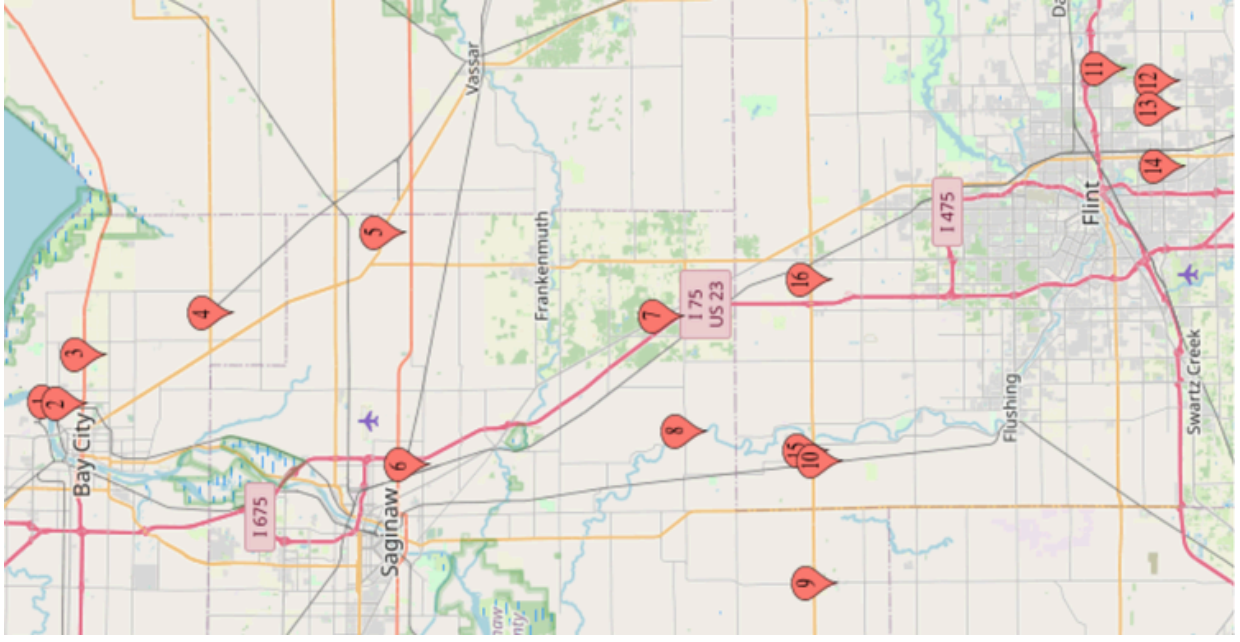
Map 1: Wayne County Polling Locations



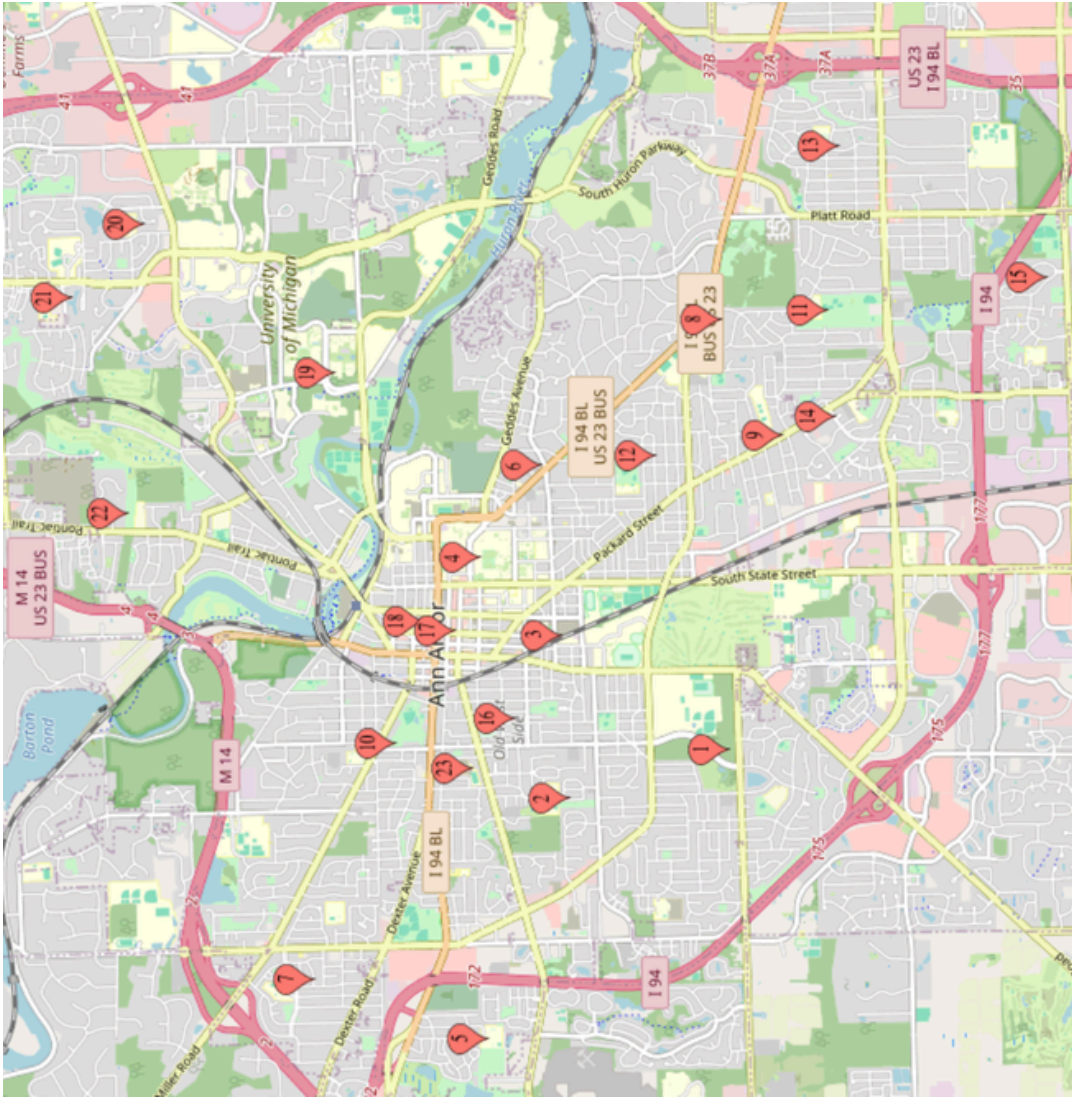
Map 2: Oakland and Macomb County Polling Locations



Map 4: Bay, Genesee, and Saginaw County Polling Locations



Map 3: Washtenaw County Polling Locations



QUESTIONNAIRE AND MEASURES

The main objective of the election observation teams was to systematically assess the external and internal accessibility of polling places, using questionnaires to record information on whether the site had:

- An accessible parking area with a clear pathway into and through the building;
- An accessible entrance;
- A fully functional voter assist terminal (VAT); and
- An accessible wheelchair-height booth for casting paper ballots privately.

Each observer answered questions in a Google form regarding these key measures. **Given that all of the features identified above are necessary to ensure that voters with disabilities have access, a polling place was considered fully accessible only if all of these criteria were fully met.** The full questionnaire used by the observation team can be found in Appendix B.

In addition to questions directly related to the key measures, a limited number of questions were included related to other measures that may impact accessibility at a polling location, such as signage related to curbside voting or individuals participating in voter intimidation efforts. While potentially impactful on accessibility for voters, items like these were not considered in assessing the accessibility of a site as they fall outside the accessibility requirements established by current law. None of those questions were taken into account when calculating accessibility score. Table 2 shows the assessment measures we used when determining the accessibility score of polling places.

Table 2: Voting Access Checklist Questions and Measures

Measures	Coding
M1: Fully accessible parking & pathway?	Yes, if yes on Q7, Q9, and Q16.
	Q7. Were there clearly marked accessible parking spots?
	Q9. Was the path from the parking space to the entrance of the voting area paved and clear of stairs, narrow doorways, and physical obstacles that would make it hard for a wheelchair user or blind/low vision person to enter?
	Q16. Was the path through the building smooth and clear of stairs, narrow doorways, and physical obstacles that would make it hard for a wheelchair user or blind/low vision person to navigate?
M2: Fully accessible entrance?	Yes, if yes on Q10, Q11, Q12, and Q13.
	Q10. Was the wheelchair accessible entrance to the voting area the main entrance for all voters, or was there a separate wheelchair-accessible entrance?
	Q11. Was the entrance/entrances clearly marked?
	Q12. Was the wheelchair-accessible entrance unlocked?
	Q13. How did the doors to get to the wheelchair-accessible entrance operate?
M3: Fully accessible Voter Assist Terminal (VAT)?	Yes, if yes on Q17, Q18, Q19, Q20, Q21 and Q22.
	Q17. Was the Voter Assist Terminal (VAT) available to use? Select all that apply.
	Q18. Was the pathway to and around the Voter Assist Terminal (VAT) free of barriers or obstructions?
	Q19. Was there enough space for a wheelchair user to position themselves to utilize the VAT?
	Q20. Did the Voter Assist Terminal (VAT) have the accessible controller plugged in and ready for use?
	Q21. Did the Voter Assist Terminal (VAT) have the headphones plugged in and ready for use?
	Q22. Was the Voter Assist Terminal (VAT) placed to ensure the voter’s secrecy?
M4: Fully accessible wheelchair-height voting booth?	Yes, if yes on Q23 and Q24.
	Q23. Was a wheelchair-height voting booth or booths for hand-marking paper ballots available, set up, and ready for use by voters?
	Q24. Was the wheelchair-height voting booth(s) (for hand-marking paper ballots) placed to ensure the voter could mark their paper ballot in secrecy?
M5: Fully accessible polling place?	Yes, if yes on M1, M2, M3 and M4.

POLLING PLACE ACCESSIBILITY FINDINGS

Early Voting

This was Michigan's second year of early voting, allowing voters to have greater flexibility regarding when they cast their ballot. This is particularly beneficial for disabled voters who benefit greatly from additional options.

Of the 32 sites assessed during early voting for the August and November elections, only 28% were fully accessible (see Table 3). However, 12 voting sites only had one access barrier or impediment. If election officials corrected that one issue at each of these voting sites, this would bring the percentage of fully accessible early voting sites up to 66%.

Table 3: Overall Accessibility Early Voting Data M1-M5 (32 sites)

Measure	NO	YES	% YES
M1: Parking & Pathway	6	26	81%
M2: Entrances	5	27	84%
M3: Voter Assist Terminal	21	11	34%
M4: Wheelchair-height Voting Booth	2	30	94%
M5: Fully Accessible Voting Site?	23	9	28%

Table 4 outlines the number of sites we assessed in each jurisdiction during Early Voting. It is important to note that Michigan law allows early voting sites to be administered separately by each municipality or by the county clerk when multiple municipalities combine into a single early voting site. As seen below, the majority of early voting sites observed were administered by a city or township clerk; however, seven multi-municipality sites were administered by the Oakland County Clerk.

Table 4: Number of Early Voting Sites observed by jurisdiction

Jurisdiction	County	# of Voting Sites Observed
Ann Arbor	Washtenaw	4
Auburn Hills	Oakland	1
Dearborn	Wayne	1
Detroit	Wayne	8
Livonia	Wayne	1
New Baltimore	Macomb	1
Northville Township	Wayne	1
Oakland Charter Township	Oakland	1
Oakland County	Oakland	7
Pontiac	Oakland	1
Rochester	Oakland	1
Southfield	Oakland	1
Sterling Heights	Macomb	1
Taylor	Wayne	1
Wayne	Wayne	1
Westland	Wayne	1

Election Day

Based on the assessment criteria outlined above in Table 2, the observation teams found that only **10% of 415 polling locations observed on Election Day in May, August, and November were fully accessible**, with 90% of locations inaccessible due to one or more impediments (see Table 5). This is unfortunately a decrease of three points from our 2024 observation which found that only 13% of polling locations were fully accessible. However, 93 polling locations (22% of all locations observed) scored “No” on only one of the four accessibility measures. If remedied, that would raise the number of fully accessible polling locations to 32%.

Table 5: Overall Accessibility Election Day Data M1-M5 (415 sites)

Measure	NO	YES	% YES
M1: Parking & Pathway	213	202	49%
M2: Entrances	198	215	52%
M3: Voter Assist Terminal	266	149	36%
M4: Wheelchair-height Voting Booth	101	314	76%
M5: Fully Accessible Polling Location?	374	41	10%

Table 6 outlines the number of polling locations we assessed in each jurisdiction. While we have visited some of these jurisdictions in previous audits, we have significantly increased our coverage beyond metro Detroit.

Table 6: Number of Election Day Polling Locations observed by jurisdiction

City	County	# of Polling Locations Observed
Ann Arbor	Washtenaw	23
Auburn Hills	Oakland	6
Berkley	Oakland	4
Birch Run Township	Saginaw	1
Blumfield Township	Saginaw	1
Buena Vista Charter Township	Saginaw	1

City	County	# of Polling Locations Observed
Burton	Genesee	4
Clawson	Oakland	3
Clinton Township	Macomb	2
Dearborn	Wayne	33
Dearborn Heights	Wayne	2
Detroit	Wayne	158
Ecorse	Wayne	1
Essexville	Bay	2
Farmington	Oakland	4
Hampton Township	Bay	1
Hamtramck	Wayne	3
Harper Woods	Wayne	3
Harrison Township	Macomb	1
Hazel Park	Oakland	5
Lathrup Village	Oakland	1
Livonia	Wayne	14
Madison Heights	Oakland	7
Maple Grove Township	Saginaw	1
Merritt Township	Bay	1
Montrose	Genesee	1
Montrose Township	Genesee	1
Mount Clemens	Macomb	4

City	County	# of Polling Locations Observed
New Baltimore	Macomb	3
Northville	Oakland/Wayne	2
Novi	Oakland	20
Pleasant Ridge	Oakland	1
Plymouth	Wayne	1
Pontiac	Oakland	7
Rochester	Oakland	2
Rochester Hills	Oakland	14
Southfield	Oakland	13
Southgate	Wayne	4
Sterling Heights	Macomb	26
Taylor	Wayne	3
Taymouth Township	Saginaw	1
Troy	Oakland	18
Vienna Charter Township	Genesee	1
Wayne	Wayne	1
Westland	Wayne	10

Parking and Pathway

While lack of accessible parking and pathways were the most prevalent barriers in 2024 with 58% of polling locations not having accessible parking or pathways, it is encouraging to see that in 2025, that number was reduced to 51%.

Slightly more than half (51%) of polling locations observed did not have accessible parking and a clear pathway into the voting area. 72% of polling locations had clearly-marked

accessible parking spots. However, 6% of polling locations that had clearly-marked accessible parking spots were obstructed or blocked. Our observers reported seeing barriers that include the following: parking lots that were accessible but completely blocked from public access, as well as accessible parking spots blocked by large objects (including a dumpster, a garbage can, cones, a delivery truck, and even campaigners). Several parking spots lacked access aisles, which are necessary for wheelchair users. 93 polling locations (22%) did not have clearly marked accessible spots. Many polling locations only had street parking, while others had parking lots that lacked an accessible space. 30 polling locations had accessible parking spaces with faded or nonexistent lines. 21 polling locations were reported as having missing or faded accessible parking signage.

In addition to taking the parking area into consideration, we must think about the path of travel from the parking area to the polling location itself. 137 (33%) polling locations were reported as having obstacles or obstructions along the path of travel outside of the polling location. Of those, 32 polling locations were reported as having obstructions, such as debris or cones, on the sidewalks. Many of these obstructions were the Election Day signage, which could be moved by poll workers

Observers also noted infrastructure issues outside the polling locations that obstructed the path of travel. Six polling locations were reported as having dangerous ramps, including a dual-track ramp that can be dangerous for mobility aid users. 33 polling locations were reported as having no curb cut nearby, or curb cuts in poor condition that would be difficult to navigate with a mobility device. Additionally, 67 polling locations were reported as having pavement in poor condition. These barriers make it dangerous and difficult for voters with disabilities to access the polling location.

Once inside, there were significant access barriers. 59 polling locations (14%) did not have a smooth and clear path through the building void of obstacles. 15 polling locations were reported as having uneven surfaces, such as bunched up rugs or cracked tiles that would be difficult to navigate. 17 polling locations were reported as having obstructions, such as large objects propping open the door or sitting along the path of travel. Seven polling locations were reported as having narrow doorways or hallways that would be difficult for a mobility device user to navigate.

Observers noted access barriers even when accessibility modifications were present: two polling locations were reported as having stairs with only a lift chair for people with disabilities to use. However, lift chairs are not accessible for mobility device users, such as those who use wheelchairs or walkers, as they would have to transfer out of those mobility devices and would not have access to those devices once up or down the stairs. One

polling location was reported as having a lift (that can move wheelchairs) that was not permitted to be operated. Lifts and elevators must be operable during times when voting is occurring in order to provide adequate access.

Although some of these barriers along the path of travel have to do with the infrastructure of polling locations, many can be fixed by moving physical objects to ensure safety and ease of navigation.

Entrances

The main entrances of 357 polling locations (86%) were accessible. For the vast majority of polling locations, the main entrance to the polling location was accessible, while 8% of polling locations had a separate wheelchair accessible entrance. Unfortunately, 25 polling locations (6%) had no wheelchair accessible entrance, rendering those polling locations completely inaccessible to wheelchair users. At one polling location, there was no accessible entrance to the voting area, but the observer noted that the building itself had an accessible entrance that was not being used. At least three polling locations had accessible entrances that had issues preventing voters from using them, including a broken chair lift and construction blocking the entrance. Three polling locations had entrances with dangerous dual-track ramps or makeshift ramps that wheelchair users could not navigate independently. Although clerks made an effort to make these polling locations more accessible, ramp installation must be completed in a safe and secure manner, and wheelchair users must be able to safely and independently navigate ramps.

Most polling places are multipurpose sites, so it is not unusual for our observers to come across locked entrances or see very little signage indicating where the voting area, let alone the accessible entrance, is located. 15% of polling locations had main entrances that were not clearly marked, while 6% of polling locations had separate wheelchair-accessible entrances that were not clearly marked. Observers noted that these polling locations needed clearer signage identifying the buildings as polling locations and signage directing voters to the voting area. Additionally, entrances must be unlocked. 8 polling locations (3%) had locked accessible entrances. Observers noted that a few entrances were able to be unlocked by poll workers, but some locations remained locked.

267 (64%) polling locations had doors that were accessible: they were button-activated with working buttons, light enough to open with one hand, or propped open with a small object like a door stopper. However, 46 polling locations (11%) had button-activated doors with broken buttons, 49 polling locations (12%) had doors that

were not button-activated and were too heavy to open with one hand, and 24 polling locations (6%) had doors that were propped open with large objects that obstructed the path of travel, such as traffic cones, garbage cans, or chairs.

Voter Assist Terminals (VAT)

In Michigan, the accessible voting system is called the Voter Assist Terminal (VAT). Currently, Michigan uses three different VATs (Hart, Dominion, and ES&S). In 2025, VATs were generally set up (except for 1), at wheelchair-height (all but 5), and powered on (all but 7). However, one polling location in Detroit, Edison School (which serves five precincts), did not have a VAT. This is a violation of the Help America Vote Act of 2002, which requires every polling place to have at least one accessible voting machine for voters with disabilities.

53 polling locations (13%) had barriers along the path of travel to the VAT. Many had obstructions such as chairs or rolling carts along the path of travel or cords on the floor. To fix this issue, poll workers should ensure that paths of travel are clear of obstructions such as large objects or cords on the floor and that there is enough room for mobility devices to navigate to and around the VAT. In 61 polling locations (15%), there were barriers that would make it difficult or impossible for a mobility device user to position themselves in front of the VAT. In most cases, the VAT was positioned too close to the wall for a wheelchair user to be able to position themselves in front of the machine. In one instance, a poll worker was using the VAT station as their sitting area. Poll workers should ensure that the VAT has enough room for a wheelchair user to maneuver in front of it, and the VAT should not be used as a work station or rest area.

In 98% of polling locations, the controller was plugged in and ready for use. In two polling locations, the controller was present but not plugged in, and in one case, there was no controller present. VATs should always have their controllers present and plugged in. Even if a VAT has touch screen capabilities, controllers provide important nonvisual access to the system.

Headphones were plugged in and ready for use in only 64% of polling locations, representing the most common access barrier related to the VAT. In 115 polling locations (28%), headphones were present but not plugged in. In some jurisdictions, such as Sterling Heights, voters are provided single-use disposable headphones, so headphones are provided to voters individually on an as-needed basis. While this is a beneficial policy for public health, it is unfortunately not compliant with accessibility law. In 36 polling locations (9%), observers reported that no headphones were available at the machine. In some cases, poll workers located the headphones after

being asked about them, but in at least 11 polling locations, poll workers were unable to locate headphones, and they suspected that election officials never provided headphones to the polling location.

In 79% of polling locations, the VAT was placed to ensure secrecy, while observers found issues with privacy in 87 polling locations. The most common barrier observed regarding privacy was that the VAT was positioned with the screen facing paths of travel or other voting booths. This issue can be remedied by turning the machine so that voters are afforded privacy. Observers also noted issues including poll workers sitting or working near the VAT with a direct line of sight to the machine, as well as VATs that did not have privacy shields around them.

Wheelchair-height Voting Booths

88% of polling locations had a wheelchair-height voting booth that was properly set up, while 40 polling locations (10%) had no booth present and an additional 11 (3%) had wheelchair-height voting booths that were not properly set up. In three polling locations, poll workers were not aware that they should set up a wheelchair-height voting booth, while in four polling locations, poll workers indicated they never received a wheelchair-height voting booth from the elections office. In four polling locations, the wheelchair-height voting booths were too high, and in one too low, for a wheelchair user to utilize. While 88% of the wheelchair-height booths were properly set up, 13% of them did not afford privacy to voters.

The access barriers observed here were similar to those observed with the VAT. Common barriers included the booth facing paths of travel or other voting booths, allowing other voters or election workers to see how a voter casts their ballot, and wheelchair-height voting booths that lacked a privacy screen. Simple adjustments to the voting site could address these barriers. Additionally, several locations had poll workers who said they would set up a booth if a wheelchair user came in, but a disabled voter should not have to wait around until a poll worker is able to set up a booth for them to cast their ballot. Lastly, the VAT table is not a suitable alternative for a wheelchair-height voting booth for hand-marking paper ballots as the VAT and wheelchair-height voting booth should be able to be used simultaneously by separate voters like any other voting booths.

ACCESSIBILITY BY JURISDICTION

The election observation team aggregated the findings from all polling locations observed within individual jurisdictions, as summarized in Table 7. It is important to note that the number of polling locations observed varies significantly among the jurisdictions, which impacts the percentages as displayed for each measure within each jurisdiction. The number of sites should also be taken into account when considering jurisdictions that received particularly high or low scores based on a limited number of sites.

Table 7: Accessibility Measures by Jurisdiction

Jurisdiction	M1: Accessible Parking & Pathway	M2: Accessible Entrance	M3: Accessible VAT	M4: Accessible Voting Booth
Ann Arbor	63% (15)	67% (16)	21% (5)	79% (19)
Auburn Hills	67% (4)	100% (6)	17% (1)	83% (5)
Berkley	0% (0)	75% (3)	0% (0)	75% (3)
Birch Run Twp	100% (1)	100% (1)	100% (1)	100% (1)
Blumfield Twp	100% (1)	100% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Buena Vista Charter Twp	100% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Burton	75% (3)	75% (3)	0% (0)	100% (4)
Clawson	67% (2)	67% (2)	100% (3)	33% (1)
Clinton Township	0% (0)	50% (1)	50% (1)	100% (2)
Dearborn	64% (21)	55% (18)	55% (18)	82% (27)

Jurisdiction	M1: Accessible Parking & Pathway	M2: Accessible Entrance	M3: Accessible VAT	M4: Accessible Voting Booth
Dearborn Heights	100% (2)	100% (2)	50% (1)	50% (1)
Detroit	30% (48)	44% (69)	51% (80)	68% (107)
Ecorse	0% (0)	100% (1)	0% (0)	100% (1)
Essexville	50% (1)	50% (1)	0% (0)	100% (2)
Farmington	75% (3)	25% (1)	75% (3)	100% (4)
Hampton Township	100% (1)	100% (1)	0% (0)	100% (1)
Hamtramck	100% (3)	100% (3)	33.3% (1)	100% (3)
Harper Woods	100% (3)	67% (2)	67% (2)	100% (3)
Harrison Township	100% (1)	100% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Hazel Park	60% (3)	60% (3)	40% (2)	40% (2)
Lathrup Village	100% (1)	100% (1)	0% (0)	100% (1)
Livonia	93% (13)	93% (13)	29% (4)	71% (10)
Madison Heights	100% (7)	29% (2)	14% (1)	100% (7)
Maple Grove Twp	100% (1)	100% (1)	0% (0)	100% (1)
Merritt Twp	0% (0)	0% (0)	100% (1)	100% (1)
Montrose	100% (1)	100% (1)	0% (0)	100% (1)
Montrose Twp	100% (1)	100% (1)	0% (0)	100% (1)
Mount Clemens	0% (0)	50% (2)	100% (4)	100% (4)
New Baltimore	33% (1)	67% (2)	0% (0)	67% (2)
Northville	50% (1)	50% (1)	100% (2)	100% (2)
Novi	60% (12)	55% (11)	25% (5)	55% (11)

Jurisdiction	M1: Accessible Parking & Pathway	M2: Accessible Entrance	M3: Accessible VAT	M4: Accessible Voting Booth
Pleasant Ridge	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	100% (1)
Plymouth	100% (1)	100% (1)	100% (1)	100% (1)
Pontiac	14% (1)	57% (4)	0% (0)	14% (1)
Rochester	100% (2)	50% (1)	0% (0)	100% (2)
Rochester Hills	79% (11)	43% (6)	0% (0)	93% (13)
Southfield	54% (7)	46% (6)	38% (5)	62% (8)
Southgate	25% (1)	25% (1)	75% (3)	25% (1)
Sterling Heights	19% (5)	15% (4)	0% (0)	96% (25)
Taylor	67% (2)	0% (0)	33% (1)	100% (3)
Taymouth Twp	100% (1)	100% (1)	0% (0)	100% (1)
Troy	56% (10)	61% (11)	0% (0)	78% (14)
Vienna Charter Twp	100% (1)	100% (1)	0% (0)	100% (1)
Wayne	100 (1)	100% (1)	0% (0)	100% (1)
Westland	80% (8)	90% (9)	10% (1)	100% (10)

32 jurisdictions scored 0% on their total accessibility score of polling locations, meaning that no site in that jurisdiction was rated as fully accessible on all four accessibility measures.

Birch Run Township and Plymouth scored the highest with 100% of their locations being fully accessible. Dearborn Heights and Northville followed behind with 50% of their locations being fully accessible (see table 8). However, it is important to note that the number of polling locations observed varies by jurisdiction, so this percentage is based on the locations observed.

Table 8: Fully Accessible Polling Locations by Jurisdiction

Jurisdiction	Not Fully Accessible	Fully Accessible	% Fully Accessible
Ann Arbor	22	2	8%
Auburn Hills	5	1	17%
Berkley	4	0	0%
Birch Run Township	0	1	100%
Blumfielf Township	1	0	0%
Buena Vista Charter Twp	1	0	0%
Burton	4	0	0%
Clawson	3	0	0%
Clinton Twp	2	0	0%
Dearborn	23	10	30%
Dearborn Heights	1	1	50%
Detroit	143	15	10%
Ecorse	1	0	0%
Essexville	2	0	0%
Farmington	4	0	0%
Hampton Twp	1	0	0%
Hamtramck	2	1	33%
Harper Woods	2	1	33%
Harrison Twp	1	0	0%
Hazel Park	4	1	20%
Lathrup Village	1	0	0%
Livonia	12	2	14%

Jurisdiction	Not Fully Accessible	Fully Accessible	% Fully Accessible
Madison Heights	7	0	0%
Maple Grove Twp	1	0	0%
Merritt Twp	1	0	0%
Montrose	1	0	0%
Montrose Twp	1	0	0%
Mount Clemens	4	0	0%
New Baltimore	3	0	0%
Northville	1	1	50%
Novi	20	0	0%
Pleasant Ridge	1	0	0%
Plymouth	0	1	100%
Pontiac	7	0	0%
Rochester	2	0	0%
Rochester Hills	14	0	0%
Southfield	9	4	31%
Southgate	4	0	0%
Sterling Heights	26	0	0%
Taylor	3	0	0%
Taymouth Twp	1	0	0%
Troy	18	0	0%
Vienna Charter Twp	1	0	0%
Wayne	1	0	0%
Westland	10	0	0%

Location of Polling Places

In Michigan, polling places can be in a wide variety of buildings, from churches and recreation centers to fire stations. Each of these locations has strengths and weaknesses regarding accessibility for voters with disabilities. Public schools and places of worship made up 73% of polling locations observed (See Table 9).

Table 9: Type of Buildings Used as Polling Locations

Building Type	# of Buildings
Apartment Building	5
Banquet Hall	4
College or University	8
Community or Recreation Center	45
Fire Station	7
Government Building	19
Library	7
Office Building	3
Place of Worship	110
Private School	2
Public School	195
Religious School	6
Retirement Home	4
Total	415

Overall, fire stations, libraries, and office buildings were the least accessible polling locations, with no locations being fully accessible in those categories. The two building types in widest use also had low scores: places of worship (9% fully accessible) and public schools (8% fully accessible). Even the highest-performing building type, private schools had a low score: Only 50% were fully accessible (See Table 10).

Table 10: Accessibility by Type of Buildings Used as Polling Locations

Type of Facility	# Buildings	# Fully Accessible	# With Accessible Parking & Pathway	# With Accessible Entrance	# With Accessible VAT	# With Accessible Voting Booth
Apartment Building	5	1 (20%)	4 (80%)	3 (60%)	2 (40%)	4 (80%)
Banquet Hall	4	1 (25%)	2 (50%)	2 (50%)	2 (50%)	2 (50%)
College or University	8	3 (38%)	7 (88%)	6 (75%)	6 (75%)	7 (88%)
Community or Recreation Center	45	6 (13%)	18 (40%)	30 (67%)	18 (40%)	38 (84%)
Fire Station	7	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	5 (71%)	3 (43%)	5 (71%)
Government Building	19	2 (11%)	16 (84%)	15 (79%)	7 (37%)	16 (84%)
Library	7	0 (0%)	3 (43%)	5 (71%)	2 (29%)	6 (86%)
Office Building	3	0 (0%)	2 (67%)	0 (0%)	1 (33%)	2 (67%)
Place of Worship	110	10 (9%)	40 (36%)	61 (55%)	46 (42%)	78 (71%)
Private School	2	1 (50%)	1 (50%)	2 (100%)	1 (50%)	1 (50%)
Public School	195	14 (8%)	89 (46%)	80 (41%)	58 (30%)	148 (76%)
Religious School	6	1 (17%)	4 (67%)	4 (67%)	1 (17%)	4 (67%)
Retirement Home	4	1 (25%)	4 (100%)	3 (75%)	1 (25%)	3 (75%)
Total	415	41	202	215	149	314

If we isolate and examine the type of polling locations based only on their structural features, measures M1 and M2 (accessible parking/pathway and entrance), fire stations and office buildings were the least accessible, scoring 0% (see table 11). The two most accessible types of buildings were government buildings (74% accessible) and retirement homes (75% accessible). It is discouraging to see that none of the building categories scored 100% given that these calculations were only taking the structural aspects of polling locations into account.

Table 11: Accessibility by Type of Buildings Used as Polling Locations: M1 & M2 ONLY

Type of Facility	# of Buildings	# Fully Accessible M1 & M2	# With Accessible Parking & Pathway	#With Accessible Entrance
Apartment Building	5	3 (60%)	4 (80%)	3 (60%)
Banquet Hall	4	1 (25%)	2 (50%)	2 (50%)
College or University	8	5 (63%)	7 (88%)	6 (75%)
Community or Recreation Center	45	21 (47%)	18 (40%)	30 (67%)
Fire Station	7	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	5 (71.43%)
Government Building	19	14 (74%)	16 (84%)	15 (79%)
Library	7	2 (29%)	3 (43%)	5 (71%)
Office Building	3	0 (0%)	2 (67%)	0 (0%)
Place of Worship	110	26 (24%)	40 (36%)	61 (55%)
Private School	2	1 (50%)	1 (50%)	2 (100%)
Public School	195	52 (27%)	89 (46%)	80 (41%)
Religious School	6	3 (50%)	4 (67%)	4 (67%)
Retirement Home	4	3 (75%)	4 (100%)	3 (75%)
Total	415	131	202	215

Many of these sites – such as schools, firehouses, and government buildings – are federally mandated to be accessible outside of their function as a polling place. Their general inaccessibility during the voting season is significant, since many of these impediments are present aside from Election Day. Improving areas where institutions are noncompliant with federal accessibility standards will greatly improve disabled people’s ability to interact with their community-at-large throughout the year. We broke down the type of polling locations based on the accessibility policy outside of Election season. 285 sites (69%) fall under ADA Title II. 116 sites are exempt from policies since they are places of worship (see Table 12); however, election officials are still required to make temporary modifications to make these sites accessible on Election Day.

Table 12: Accessibility of Buildings by Accessibility Policy Outside of Election Season

Accessibility Policy	# Buildings	# Fully Accessible	# With Accessible Parking & Pathway	# With Accessible Entrance	# With Accessible VAT	# With Accessible Voting Booth
ADA Title II	285	26 (9%)	149 (52%)	141 (49%)	89 (31%)	223 (78%)
ADA Title III	8	3 (38%)	4 (50%)	6 (75%)	4 (50%)	5 (63%)
Fair Housing Act	6	1 (17%)	5 (83%)	4 (67%)	2 (33%)	4 (67%)
Exempt	116	11 (9%)	44 (38%)	65 (56%)	47 (41%)	82 (71%)
Total	415	41	202	215	149	314

We further broke down the accessibility of polling locations based on which policy requires that building to be accessible. Specifically, we were seeking to understand how many of the accessibility barriers are architectural versus operational. Table 13 shows the accessibility of polling locations based on M1 and M2 only. Polling locations that fall under the Fair Housing Act were the most accessible at 67%.

Table 13: Structural Accessibility by Policy Outside of Election Season

Accessibility Policy	# of Buildings	# Fully Accessible M1 & M2	# With Accessible Parking & Pathway	#With Accessible Entrance
ADA Title II	285	95 (33%)	149 (52%)	141 (49%)
ADA Title III	8	3 (38%)	4 (50%)	6 (75%)
Fair Housing Act	6	4 (67%)	5 (83%)	4 (67%)
Exempt	116	29 (25%)	44 (38%)	65 (56%)
Total	415	130	202	215

Lastly, we compared our 2025 data to the data we collected at the same polling locations in 2022 and 2024. While the accessibility of parking and pathways increased from 2024 to 2025 and we see an increase in the accessibility of wheelchair-height voting booths, we see a decline in accessibility of VATs and accessible entrances (see Table 14).

Table 14: Accessibility of Polling Locations Observed in 2022, 2024 and 2025

Measure	% Accessible 2022	% Accessible 2024	% Accessible 2025	% Change 2024-2025
Parking & Pathway	54%	33%	38%	+5%
Entrances	45%	59%	47%	-12%
Voter Assist Terminal	45%	62%	48%	-14%
Wheelchair-height Voting Booth	60%	54%	70%	+16%
Fully accessible polling Location?	15%	9%	13%	+4%

Table 15 shows the changes by jurisdiction. Dearborn demonstrated notable improvement, increasing from 6% in 2024 to 30% in 2025. Harper Woods increased to 33% from 0% in 2024. Unfortunately, Southfield declined from 57% to 31%. Ecorse decreased from 25% to 0%. It's important to note that while Ecorse had four polling locations in 2024, they consolidated to one polling location in 2025. This consolidation had a clear impact on

accessibility, as the location chosen for 2025 was not fully accessible. Clerks must take accessibility into consideration when choosing or consolidating polling places. Detroit remained largely stagnant with a marginal increase to 10%.

Table 15: Overall Accessibility by Jurisdiction of Polling Locations Observed in 2022, 2024, and 2025

Jurisdiction	% Accessible 2022	% Accessible 2024	% Accessible 2025	% Change 2024-2025
Center Line	50%	2%	-	N/A
Dearborn	10%	6%	30%	+24%
Detroit	12%	9%	10%	+1%
Ecorse	25%	25%	0%	-25%
Grosse Pointe	0%	0%	-	N/A
Grosse Pointe Farms	50%	0%	-	N/A
Grosse Pointe Park	0%	0%	-	N/A
Grosse Pointe Shores	0%	0%	-	N/A
Grosse Pointe Woods	67%	50%	-	N/A
Hamtramck	100%	33%	33%	0%
Harper Woods	0%	0%	33%	+33%
Hazel Park	-	50%	20%	-30%
Highland Park	40%	60%	-	N/A
River Rouge	0%	0%	-	N/A
Southfield	25%	57%	31%	-26%
Sterling Heights	-	0%	0%	0%
Warren	31%	3%	-	N/A

RECOMMENDATIONS

All of the issues highlighted in this report can be addressed. The recommendations below are organized for two audiences: Michigan election officials, who are responsible for the day-to-day administration of polling places, and other government officials (at the state and municipal level) whose decisions about funding, legislation, and infrastructure shape what election officials are able to accomplish.

It is worth noting upfront that most of the recommendations directed at election officials require no new budget and no legislation. They are quick fixes, achievable through training, coordination, and operational changes that are within reach right now. The most common barrier to accessible voting in Michigan is not legal complexity or lack of resources, it is the absence of standardized practice. That is something that can change.

Each recommendation is labeled to indicate what it requires to implement. A summary reference chart for recommendations for Election Officials can be found in Appendix C, while recommendations for other Government Officials can be found in Appendix D.

- **Quick fix** - No additional budget required. Achievable through training, coordination, or simple operational changes.
- **Requires funding** - Needs budget allocation at the local, county, or state level.
- **Requires legislation** - Needs new or amended state or federal law to implement.

Recommendations for Election Officials

Coordination and Liaison

The single most effective step an election official can take is to not work alone. Every public entity with 50 or more employees has a designated ADA coordinator, a resource that too few clerks are currently using. We recommend that election officials **coordinate with their jurisdiction's ADA coordinator [Quick fix]** to evaluate both existing polling places and any sites under consideration for future use. This means walking through sites together in advance of elections, not just checking boxes on a form. When accessibility is considered on a site-by-site basis, clerks and election workers are more able to address accessibility barriers before they arise and have a plan for providing accommodations to voters who may experience a known barrier.

Equally important is having a clear point of contact when something goes wrong. We recommend that every jurisdiction **designate a primary contact person for election-related accessibility topics [Quick fix]** and make it easy for staff, poll workers, voters, and advocates to reach that person on Election Day. The difference this makes is not theoretical. When observers at a Dearborn polling location reported a locked accessible entrance to the site Chairperson on Election Day, custodial staff were located who were able to unlock the door. Had custodial staff not been onsite at the time, it is possible the door would have remained locked for hours, meaning voters with disabilities would encounter a locked door with no recourse and no one empowered to help them.

Training

Our audit data points clearly to poll worker training as one of the highest-leverage interventions available. We recommend that Michigan **standardize poll worker training on voter accessibility issues [Requires funding]** across all jurisdictions. Currently, the quality of training depends almost entirely on the individual clerk; their familiarity with the law, the time they have available, and the materials they create on their own. This results in dramatically different training experiences from one jurisdiction to the next. In jurisdictions without standardized training, poll workers often struggle to answer questions related to assisting VAT users. In Sterling Heights, observers noted that poll workers could explain a very clear process for ensuring VAT users had access to new, clean headphones, if desired. While headphones should be plugged in and available without a voter needing to request them, the clear process across polling places illustrates the impact of standardized, clear training.

We specifically recommend that training include a **hands-on "practice election" [Quick fix]** in which poll workers activate the VAT, navigate it as a voter would, make ballot selections, and submit the ballot through the same process voters use on Election Day, including feeding the marked ballot into a tabulator prepared for the exercise. This is not an abstract recommendation. At one Detroit precinct, an individual voter has experienced issues related to their use of the VAT in every recent election. The issues have included the voter being unsure if their ballot was counted when they left their polling location (and being unable to verify that it was) to a multi-hour voting experience where they and their service animal were mistreated. In each case, the election workers' lack of familiarity with processes and equipment has played a major role in the issues.

Poll workers should also **know where the wheelchair-height voting booth is located and have it set up and ready before the first voter arrives [Quick fix]**. This should be a standard part of pre-election setup, not something done on request.

Exterior Accessibility

Many of the exterior barriers our observers documented are not structural — they are operational, and they are fixable with the right preparation. We recommend that jurisdictions **clearly mark the accessible path of travel throughout each polling place [Quick fix]**, using consistent signage from the parking area to the entrance, even when the path appears obvious. At multiple locations in 2025, the accessible entrance was located at the side or rear of the building with no signage visible from the parking area. Observers who knew where to look still had difficulty finding it. A voter arriving independently, perhaps for the first time, would have had little chance.

We also recommend that jurisdictions **ensure accessible entrances are unlocked before polls open [Quick fix]**, especially when the accessible entrance is separate from the main entrance. This requires coordination with the facility owner in advance, not a last-minute check. At one polling location, the accessible entrance was locked from the outside but could be opened from inside — meaning a voter using a wheelchair had no way to enter without assistance, despite a physically compliant entrance existing on paper. Compliance on paper is not compliance in practice. When propping open a door is the only available option, the object used must never obstruct the doorway itself. Wheelchair users must be able to pass through freely in both directions.

Interior Accessibility

Once inside, voters with disabilities need two things above all else: equipment that is set up and ready, and a voting experience that protects their privacy. On both counts, our 2025 data identified significant room for improvement.

We recommend that every polling place **provide an accessible, wheelchair-height voting booth for marking a paper ballot, along with a moveable chair [Requires funding]**, set up and ready before polls open. Not all voters with disabilities choose to use a VAT, and not all disabilities require one. At multiple locations in 2025, poll workers set up the accessible voting booth upon the request of observers. This approach places the burden on the voter to identify themselves as disabled and wait while equipment is retrieved — the opposite of the independent voting experience the law requires and voters deserve.

We also recommend that jurisdictions **ensure VATs and accessible voting booths are placed to protect voter privacy [Quick fix]**. A voter using accessible equipment should have a voting experience equivalent to any other voter at that polling place. At multiple locations in 2025, the VAT screen was directly visible from the check-in table where poll workers were seated. In each case, rotating the machine 45 degrees would have resolved the problem at no cost. Privacy is not a courtesy — it is a legal requirement, and it is one that in many cases requires nothing more than attention to placement.

Recommendations for Other Government Officials

The recommendations above are primarily within the reach of election officials acting on their own initiative. But the recommendations below require action from state legislators, the Secretary of State's office, and municipal governments. Without movement at this level, the structural conditions that produce inaccessible polling places will remain unchanged regardless of how hard individual clerks work.

Funding

We recommend that state entities — whether the legislature or the Secretary of State's office — **allocate sufficient dedicated funding to support county and city clerks in making their polling places accessible [Requires funding]**. The funding gap is real and well-documented. Many clerks operate on departmental budgets with no capital improvement line items. Accessibility fixes — even minor ones, like repairing a broken door push button — go unaddressed not because clerks are indifferent, but because there is no funding mechanism to act on them.

In order to better address and understand barriers to accessible voting, the state should **allocate funding specifically for identifying accessibility issues at all polling places [Requires funding]**. Polling place audits, like those conducted by Detroit Disability Power, are essential for identifying both the location specific and systemic issues that disabled voters experience. By identifying them, clerks will be better able to find solutions or request support in ensuring their polling places are accessible. This would also give decision-makers a clearer and more comprehensive picture of where problems exist and where progress is being made.

We also recommend that state entities **provide greater training and guidance to municipalities [Quick fix]** on complying with state and federal accessibility statutes. Many clerks are not fully aware of the legal obligations they carry, the temporary modifications available to them, or the resources — including federal Title II compliance funding — that may already be available to support improvements.

Legislation

We recommend that the Michigan legislature **pass a law requiring municipalities to report VAT usage to the Michigan Department of State [Requires legislation]**. Michigan currently has no mechanism for knowing whether accessible voting equipment is being used across its more than 1,500 jurisdictions. Without that data, it is impossible to know whether VATs are being set up but going unused, or whether voters are declining them because of setup problems. Accountability requires measurement, and measurement requires reporting. This gap also sends an unintended message: that VAT usage and accessibility are not priorities worth tracking. They are.

Infrastructure

Finally, we urge municipalities to **invest in the structural improvements [Requires funding]** that would make polling places — and the public buildings that house them — accessible year-round. In 2025, 33 polling locations had curb cuts in poor condition or missing entirely. These are barriers that exist 365 days a year, not just on Election Day. Improving sidewalks, repairing door push buttons, eliminating narrow doorways, and addressing uneven surfaces benefits the entire community, not just voters with disabilities. Municipalities with ADA transition plans that include polling place infrastructure can often access federal Title II compliance funding to support this work. Many clerks are not aware these pathways exist. Connecting them to those resources is itself a form of support the state can provide.

For a complete summary of all recommendations, including implementation labels and examples drawn from 2025 audit findings, see Appendix C and D.

CONCLUSION

The data in this report tells a consistent story. In 2022, 16% of the Election Day polling locations we assessed were fully accessible. In 2024, that number fell to 13%. In 2025, it fell again to 10%. Over four years and more than 1,000 individual polling place observations, the trend has moved in the wrong direction.

This is not a story about isolated failures or individual bad actors. The barriers documented in this report — a dumpster blocking an accessible parking spot, headphones unplugged from a VAT, a wheelchair-height voting booth still in storage when polls open — are symptoms of a system that has not been given the resources, structure, or accountability it needs to function as the law requires. Clerks across Michigan are working hard under difficult conditions. Many want to do better and do not know how, or cannot afford to. That is a system problem, not a people problem, and it demands a system-level response.

Michigan's accessibility challenges are compounded by the structure of its election administration. With more than 1,500 jurisdictions each operating largely independently, the quality of a voter's experience at the polls depends too much on which city or township they happen to live in. This level of variation is incompatible with the equal protection principles at the heart of the Voting Rights Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act. A disabled voter in Montrose should have the same access to a private and independent ballot as a disabled voter in Hampton Township, or Ann Arbor, or Detroit.

The gap between legal obligation and on-the-ground reality is real, but it is not inevitable. As the data also show, nearly one in four inaccessible polling location in 2025 failed on only one measure. Many of the barriers we documented require no construction budget and no legislation; they require training, preparation, and attention. The tools exist. The law is clear. What has been missing is the coordinated will, at the state level, to ensure that every jurisdiction has what it needs to meet its obligations.

There are meaningful signs of progress. Dearborn improved from 6% accessible in 2024 to 30% in 2025, proof that sustained advocacy and clerk engagement produce

results. Accessible parking and pathways improved by 16 percentage points year over year. Some jurisdictions are getting better, and that matters.

But 90% of polling locations falling short of accessibility standards in 2025 is not a success story. Nearly 30% of Michigan's voting-age population has a disability. These are not edge cases or outliers — they are neighbors, coworkers, family members, and community members whose right to vote privately and independently is being compromised every election by barriers that are, in most cases, entirely preventable.

Detroit Disability Power will continue this work. We will continue auditing, reporting, advocating, and training. And we will continue working directly with clerks, county administrators, state officials, and legislative partners who are ready to act. The recommendations in this report are not a wish list. They are a roadmap, grounded in four years of data, for bringing Michigan's polling places into compliance with the law and into alignment with the values of a democracy that works for everyone. The barriers are real. The fixes are known. The moment to act is now.

ABOUT DETROIT DISABILITY POWER

Detroit Disability Power's mission is to ensure Detroiters with disabilities have full access to our city, from transit and housing, to voting rights and the arts. DDP was founded as a response to the lack of disability analysis within social justice movements, design spaces, and government.

Since 2018, Detroit Disability Power has been building the political power of disabled Detroiters. By building up the courage and leadership skills of fellow disabled residents, we'll amass the power necessary to lead decision making. We'll make choices towards inclusion, full and consistent accessibility, and resources distribution to undo centuries of Ableism.

Our Values

Disability is a normal/positive part of human diversity. Our disabilities are essential parts of who we are, places of power and self-love, giving us great assets to share with the world around us.

Nothing About Us, Without Us: We are people with disabilities building power and inclusive social justice movements. We work to dismantle the very real structural and cultural challenges facing us. We organize for the policy and systems change we need and want, therefore making tangible changes in people's lives and shifting power to those most affected by issues.

We organize and serve people with diverse disabilities. We are committed to no hierarchy of disability in our work, engaging with people across disabilities, including chronic illness.

Disabled people have other important identities, which also affect our lived experiences and access to opportunity. Our power-building efforts will always be with an intersectional lens and with attention to race, class, gender, sexual orientation, citizenship status, religion, and other identities that affect our lives.

True Inclusion is Revolutionary. When we evolve our institutions to fully include disabled people, we inevitably build more equitable, accountable, safe, and compassionate communities that are better for everyone.

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We are grateful to have amazing partners who help uplift our work and prioritize accessibility in their election protection efforts. We are particularly appreciative for the support and friendship of the Michigan Voices Table Partners, the Voting with Disabilities in Michigan Coalition, the ACLU of Michigan, Promote the Vote, and the Michigan Department of State Ombudsperson for Accessible Elections David Foster.

Finally, the staff of Detroit Disability Power contributed to the poll audits and this report in countless ways. Every single person at DDP played some role in this work. They were auditors, data reviewers, thought partners, editors, advocates and educators. Everything we achieve, we achieve together. Thank you.

Appendix A: Disability Statistics

Adult Disability Statistics by State²²

State	Adult Population	Disabled population	Any Disability	Hearing Disability	Vision Disability	Cognitive Disability	Mobility Disability	Independent Living Disability	Self-care Disability
Michigan	8,002,705	2,310,271	29%	6%	5%	14%	12%	9%	3%

Adult Disability Statistics by County²³

County	Adult Population	Disabled population	Any Disability	Hearing Disability	Vision Disability	Cognitive Disability	Mobility Disability	Independent Living Disability	Self-care Disability
Bay	82,758	24,745	30%	7%	5%	16%	12%	9%	3%
Macomb	695,938	210,869	30%	6%	4%	15%	12%	8%	3%
Oakland	1,015,769	222,453	22%	5%	3%	12%	9%	6%	3%
Saginaw	147,908	49,105	33%	7%	6%	17%	14%	10%	4%
Washtenaw	299,903	70,477	24%	6%	4%	12%	9%	7%	3%
Wayne	1,339,690	439,418	33%	6%	6%	16%	15%	10%	5%

²² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. U.S. State Profile Data: 18+ years of age, Michigan. Accessed March 12, 2026. <https://www.cdc.gov/dhds/impacts/index.html>.

²³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. PLACES: Local Data for Better Health, County Data, 2025 Release. Accessed March 12, 2026. <https://www.cdc.gov/places>.

Adult Disability Statistics by Jurisdiction ²⁴

Jurisdiction	Adult Population	Disabled population	Any Disability	Hearing Disability	Vision Disability	Cognitive Disability	Mobility Disability	Independent Living Disability	Self-care Disability
Ann Arbor	107,002	24,610	23%	5%	4%	12%	9%	7%	3%
Auburn Hills	20,843	5,252	25%	6%	5%	14%	10%	8%	3%
Berkley	12,127	2,365	20%	5%	3%	11%	7%	5%	2%
Buena Vista Charter Twp	4,226	2,007	48%	7%	14%	24%	27%	19%	11%
Burton	23,378	8,299	36%	7%	6%	19%	15%	11%	4%
Clawson	9,693	2,152	22%	5%	3%	12%	9%	6%	2%
Dearborn	79,260	26,631	34%	7%	6%	17%	15%	11%	5%
Dearborn Heights	47,548	15,786	33%	7%	6%	17%	15%	11%	5%
Detroit	480,118	192,527	40%	6%	11%	20%	21%	15%	8%
Ecorse	6,853	2,823	41%	7%	10%	21%	21%	15%	7%
Essexville	2,659	667	25%	6%	3%	13%	9%	7%	3%
Farmington	9,419	1,808	19%	5%	3%	10%	8%	5%	2%
Hamtramck	18,973	8,139	42%	9%	11%	22%	22%	16%	8%

²⁴ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. PLACES: Local Data for Better Health, Place Data, 2025 Release. Accessed March 12, 2026. <https://www.cdc.gov/places>.

Jurisdiction	Adult Population	Disabled population	Any Disability	Hearing Disability	Vision Disability	Cognitive Disability	Mobility Disability	Independent Living Disability	Self-care Disability
Harper Woods	11,593	3,826	33%	5%	7%	16%	15%	11%	5%
Hazel Park	12,499	3,525	28%	6%	5%	16%	12%	9%	4%
Lathrup Village	3,438	784	23%	4%	4%	12%	10%	7%	3%
Livonia	78,430	19,137	24%	5%	3%	12%	9%	7%	3%
Madison Heights	23,767	6,084	26%	6%	4%	14%	11%	8%	3%
Montrose	1,283	516	40%	8%	7%	21%	18%	13%	6%
Mount Clemens	12,679	4,412	35%	7%	6%	18%	15%	10%	4%
New Baltimore	9,445	2,645	28%	6%	4%	14%	10%	7%	3%
Northville	4,948	935	19%	5%	2%	9%	7%	5%	2%
Novi	50,840	9,761	19%	5%	3%	10%	8%	5%	2%
Pleasant Ridge	2,105	352	17%	4%	2%	9%	6%	4%	2%
Plymouth	7,695	1,601	21%	5%	3%	10%	7%	5%	2%
Pontiac	45,852	16,277	36%	7%	9%	19%	18%	13%	7%
Rochester	10,363	1,907	18%	5%	3%	10%	7%	5%	2%

Jurisdiction	Adult Population	Disabled population	Any Disability	Hearing Disability	Vision Disability	Cognitive Disability	Mobility Disability	Independent Living Disability	Self-care Disability
Rochester Hills	59,663	11,754	20%	5%	3%	10%	8%	5%	2%
Southfield	63,400	16,611	26%	4%	5%	14%	13%	8%	4%
Southgate	24,707	7,338	30%	6%	5%	15%	12%	9%	3%
Sterling Heights	108,048	32,955	31%	6%	4%	15%	12%	9%	3%
Taylor	49,432	16,659	34%	7%	6%	17%	15%	11%	5%
Troy	68,020	12,924	19%	5%	3%	10%	8%	5%	2%
Wayne	14,036	4,772	34%	7%	6%	17%	15%	11%	5%
Westland	68,891	21,701	32%	6%	5%	16%	14%	10%	4%

Note: The following jurisdictions are not available in the Places: Local Data for Better Health, Place Data, 2025 Release: Birch Run Township, Blumfield Township, Clinton Township, Hampton Township, Harrison Township, Maple Grove Township, Merritt Township, Montrose Township, Taymouth Township and Vienna Charter Township. Data related to the disability prevalence of these communities can be found in the PLACES: Local Data for Better Health, Census Tract, 2025 Release available at <https://www.cdc.gov/places>. In that data set, each of these communities is aggregated with other communities within their census tract.

Appendix B: Audit Questionnaire

The audit questionnaire was developed collaboratively by Detroit Disability Power and The Carter Center. It has been adapted over time based on feedback from observers to improve usability and data accuracy. Responses were gathered via online Google Form completed by observers via mobile device while they were at polling places.

Q1. Your Name.

Q2. Time of arrival.

Q3. Polling place municipality.

Q4. Type of building.

Q5. Name of polling place (*please use the name on your spreadsheet*).

Q6. Was the information listed on the spreadsheet (name and address) correct?

- Yes – The information on the spreadsheet (name and address) is correct.
- No – I discovered a discrepancy. I will describe it below.

Q7. Were there clearly-marked accessible parking spots? (i.e. blue lines, access aisle, and obvious signage in parking lots; or blue lines and obvious signage for on-street parking.)

- Yes – There are easily identifiable parking spots reserved for those with disabilities.
- No – There are no parking spots anywhere marked explicitly for people with disabilities, or the signage is unclear.
- There is accessible parking, but the access aisle is obstructed or the parking space is blocked.

Q8. Was there signage visible from the street or parking area with information about curbside voting?

- Yes – there was signage about curbside voting that was visible to voters upon arrival.
- No – there was signage about curbside voting, but it had fallen over or was blocked
- No – there was no signage about curbside voting visible.

Q9. Was the path from the parking space to the entrance of the voting area paved and clear of stairs, narrow doorways, and physical obstacles that would make it hard for a wheelchair user or blind/low vision person to enter?

- Yes – the path was paved and clear of any obstacles.
- No – the path was not paved and/or had physical obstacles.

Q10. Was the wheelchair accessible entrance to the voting area the main entrance for all voters, or was there a separate wheelchair-accessible entrance?

- Main entrance for all voters.
- Separate wheelchair-accessible entrance.
- No wheelchair-accessible entrance.

Q11. Was the entrance/entrances clearly marked?

- Yes – The main entrance was accessible and clearly marked.
- Yes - There was a separate wheelchair-accessible entrance that was clearly marked with accessible signage.
- No – There was a separate wheelchair-accessible entrance that was not clearly marked with accessible signage.
- No – The main entrance was accessible, but the signage was poor and difficult to find.
- There was no wheelchair accessible entrance.

Q12. Was the wheelchair-accessible entrance unlocked?

- Yes – The accessible entrance was unlocked.
- No – The accessible entrance was locked.
- There was no wheelchair-accessible entrance.

Q13. How did the doors to get to the wheelchair-accessible entrance operate?

- Doors were button-activated.
- There was a button, but the button did not work.
- Doors were locked, so I could not determine.
- Doors were light enough to open with one hand.
- Doors were heavy and/or there was no button.
- Doors were obstructed (i.e. propped open by an object that blocked passage).
- Doors were propped open and were not obstructed.
- The door was automatic (operated by a motion sensor or pressure pad)
- There was no wheelchair-accessible entrance.

Q14. Was anyone pressuring/intimidating voters in the area around the polling place? (The mere presence of campaign volunteers is not pressure or intimidation.)

- Yes – Someone was pressuring or intimidating voters outside the polling place; I'll explain below.
- No – Nobody was pressuring or intimidating voters outside the polling place.

Q15. Was anyone blocking access to the polling place, or acting violently?

- Yes – Someone was blocking access to the polling place or acting violently; I'll explain below.
- No – Nobody was blocking access to the polling place or acting violently.

Q16. Was the path through the building smooth and clear of stairs, narrow doorways, and physical obstacles that would make it hard for a wheelchair user or blind/low vision person to navigate?

- Yes - the path was smooth and clear of any physical obstacles.
- No - the path was not smooth and/or there were physical obstacles.

Q17. Was the Voter Assist Terminal (VAT) available to use? Select all that apply.

- The VAT was physically set up.
- The VAT was at wheelchair height.
- The VAT was powered on.
- There was no VAT.

Q18. Was the pathway to and around the Voter Assist Terminal (VAT) free of barriers or obstructions?

- Yes - the path to the VAT and around it was free of barriers or obstructions.
- No - the path to the VAT and around it was not free of barriers or obstructions.

Q19. Was there enough space for a wheelchair user to position themselves to utilize the VAT?

- Yes - there was enough space for a wheelchair user to position themselves to utilize the VAT.
- No - the VAT was too close to objects/walls for a wheelchair user to position themselves to utilize the VAT.

Q20. Did the Voter Assist Terminal (VAT) have the accessible controller plugged in and ready for use?

- Yes - controller was plugged in and ready for use.
- No - controller was present but not plugged in.
- No - there was no controller present.

Q21. Did the Voter Assist Terminal (VAT) have the headphones plugged in and ready for use?

- Yes - headphones were plugged in and ready for use.
- No - headphones were present but not plugged in.
- No - headphones were not present.

Q22. Was the Voter Assist Terminal (VAT) placed to ensure the voter's secrecy?

- Yes - the VAT was placed to ensure the voter's secrecy.
- No - the VAT was not placed to ensure the voter's secrecy.
- There was no VAT available.

Q23. Was a wheelchair-height voting booth or booths for hand-marking paper ballots available, set up, and ready for use by voters?

- Yes - there was a wheelchair-height voting booth(s) for hand-marking paper ballots set up and ready for use.
- No - there was a wheelchair-height voting booth(s) but it was not set up and ready for use.
- There was no wheelchair-height voting booth available.

Q24. Was the wheelchair-height voting booth(s) (for hand-marking paper ballots) placed to ensure the voter could mark their paper ballot in secrecy?

- Yes – The wheelchair-height voting booth(s) in the building were placed to ensure the voter’s secrecy.
- No – The wheelchair-height voting booth(s) in the building were not placed to ensure the voter’s secrecy; I’ll explain below.
- There was no wheelchair-height voting booth available.

Q25. Was anyone interfering in the work of the poll workers?

- Yes - Someone was interfering in the work of the poll workers; I will explain below.
- No – Nobody was interfering in the work of the poll workers.

Q26. Are there any photos of access barriers taken outside the polling place you’d like to share? Please upload them here or email them. If emailing, be sure to include the name of the polling place.

Q27. (optional) Is there anything else you want to report?

Q28. Time of departure.

Appendix C: Recommendations for Election Officials

How to Read This Table:

- **Quick fix** — No additional budget required. Achievable through training, coordination, or simple operational changes.
- **Requires funding** — Needs budget allocation at local, county, or state level.

Recommendation	What It Takes	Example from 2025 Audits
Coordination & Liaison		
Coordinate with your ADA coordinator to evaluate existing and potential polling place facilities.	Quick fix	<i>When accessibility is considered on a site-by-site basis, clerks and election workers are more able to address accessibility barriers before they arise and have a plan for providing accommodations to voters who may experience a known barrier.</i>
Designate a primary contact person for election-related accessibility topics.	Quick fix	<i>When observers at a Dearborn polling location reported a locked accessible entrance to the site Chairperson on Election Day, custodial staff were located who were able to unlock the door. Had custodial staff not been onsite at the time, it is possible the door would have remained locked for hours.</i>
Training		
Standardize poll worker training on voter accessibility issues.	Requires funding	<i>Observers in Sterling Heights noted that poll workers could explain a very clear process for ensuring VAT users had access to new, clean headphones, if desired. While headphones should be plugged in and available without a voter needing to request them, the clear process across polling places illustrates the impact of standardized, clear training. In jurisdictions without standardized training, poll workers often struggle to answer questions related to assisting VAT users.</i>
Incorporate a "practice election" into poll worker training.	Quick fix	<i>At one Detroit precinct, an individual voter has experienced issues related to their use of the VAT in every recent election. The issues have included the voter being unsure if their ballot was counted when they left their polling location (and being unable to verify that it was) to a multi-hour voting experience where they and their service animal were mistreated. In each case, the election workers' lack of familiarity with processes and equipment has played a major role in the issues.</i>

Recommendation	What It Takes	Example from 2025 Audits
Exterior Accessibility		
Clearly mark the accessible path of travel throughout each polling place.	Quick fix	<i>At multiple sites, the accessible entrance was around the side or rear of the building with no signage from the parking area. Observers who knew where to look still had difficulty locating it.</i>
Ensure that accessible entrances are unlocked, especially if the accessible entrance is a separate entrance.	Quick fix	<i>At one polling location, the accessible entrance was locked from the outside but could be opened from inside, meaning a voter using a wheelchair had no way to enter without assistance, despite a compliant entrance existing on paper.</i>
Interior Accessibility		
Provide an accessible wheelchair-height voting booth for marking a paper ballot and a moveable chair.	Requires funding	<i>At multiple sites, poll workers set up the accessible voting booth upon the request of observers. This places the burden on the voter to disclose a disability and wait while equipment is retrieved, the opposite of the independent voting experience the law requires.</i>
Ensure that VATs and accessible voting booths are placed to protect voters' privacy.	Quick fix	<i>At multiple precincts, the VAT screen was directly visible from the check-in table where poll workers were seated. Rotating the machine 45 degrees would have resolved this at no cost.</i>

Appendix D: Recommendations for Other Government Officials

How to Read this Table:

- **Requires funding** — Needs budget allocation at local, county, or state level.
- **Requires legislation** — Needs new or amended state or federal law to implement.

Recommendation	What It Takes	Example from 2025 Audits
Allocate sufficient funds to support county and city clerks as they seek to make their polling places accessible.	Requires funding	<i>Many clerks operate on departmental budgets with no capital improvement line items. Accessibility fixes (even minor ones like repairing a broken door button) go unaddressed not because clerks are indifferent, but because there is no funding mechanism to act on them.</i>
Allocate funding specifically for identifying accessibility issues at all polling places	Requires funding	<i>Polling place audits, like those conducted by Detroit Disability Power, are essential for identifying both the location specific and systemic issues that disabled voters experience. By identifying issues, clerks will be better able to find solutions or request support in ensuring their polling places are accessible. This would also give decision-makers a clearer and more comprehensive picture of where problems exist and where progress is being made.</i>
Pass a law requiring municipalities to report VAT usage to the Michigan Department of State.	Requires legislation	<i>Michigan currently has no way to know whether accessible voting equipment is being used across its 1,500+ jurisdictions. Without usage data, it is impossible to know whether VATs are being set up but not offered, or whether voters are declining them due to setup issues.</i>
Focus on structural improvements to polling places — sidewalks, narrow doorways, door push buttons, curb cuts.	Requires funding	<i>33 polling locations had curb cuts in poor condition or missing entirely, barriers present 365 days a year. Municipalities with ADA transition plans that include polling place infrastructure can often access federal Title II compliance funding; many clerks are not aware these pathways exist.</i>



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