



Talent and Economic
Development Department
of Michigan

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday, May 20, 2019

Contact: [Erica Quealy](#)

517-582-2961

**Lt. Gov. Gilchrist II joins Lansing-area business, education, labor
and workforce development leaders to announce the launch of Going PRO, largest effort
in Michigan history to promote Professional Trades and help fill state's talent gap**
Campaign aims to address skilled-labor shortage that employers say is critical economic priority

LANSING – Lt. Gov. Garlin Gilchrist II, along with local leaders in business, education, labor and workforce development, today launched one of the nation's most ambitious education and awareness campaigns to help Michigan employers fill an estimated 545,000 skilled-labor jobs coming open through 2026.

Dated perceptions of careers in Professional Trades combined with an increase of baby boomers retiring has led to a steady decline in the number of people with the skills needed to fill these viable careers – posing the single greatest threat to the state's continued economic recovery.

The Going PRO in Michigan campaign is the largest effort in state history promoting the importance of Professional Trades careers with the aim of attracting more prospective candidates to address Michigan's high-skilled labor shortage.

The campaign will build awareness and change perceptions about careers in the trades, as well as guide students, their parents and influencers to [Going-PRO.com](#) so they can find career pathways, pay information and job growth projections for these careers and find training and education opportunities.

"We need to expand the conversation about Professional Trades – too many Michiganders are unaware these careers are in high demand, pay quality wages and are highly rewarding," said Gilchrist, who appeared at the Lansing Community College Center for Manufacturing Excellence to announce the Going PRO kickoff.

The Going PRO campaign, spearheaded by the [Talent and Economic Development \(Ted\) Department of Michigan](#), will highlight a diverse range of high-skilled trade occupations and industries – careers Ted collectively refers to as Professional Trades – to help fill vacancies and the 47,000 new jobs that are forecast to be available every year in Michigan through 2026.

"Michigan has a big job to do in helping employers fill this enormous talent pipeline in Professional Trades, mostly in the fields of construction, manufacturing, healthcare, automotive and information technology," said Stephanie Beckhorn, Ted's acting director.

Going PRO aims to dispel the myths about Professional Trades as "dark, dirty and dangerous" and showcase numerous career options, from welders, millwrights and lineworkers to medical sonographers, web developers and industrial mechanics.

"Employers, educators and our partners in labor and workforce development are committed to encouraging a variety of new pathways for career exploration and cultivating highly skilled workers in Greater Lansing and across the state," said Edythe Copeland, CEO of [Capital Area Michigan Works!](#)

Proponents say Professional Trades can provide opportunities for students and families to avoid tuition debt through options such as paid apprenticeships where students' education and training are paid by the employer. Ted-commissioned research shows:

- Only 1 in 3 Michigan parents encourage children to enter Professional Trades.

- Interest in pursuing Professional Trades varies by region, with a high of 17% students in Greater Lansing/Jackson saying they'll pursue a certificate, followed by 13% in the Great Lakes Bay Region that includes Genesee, Bay, Saginaw and Midland counties and the Thumb Region that includes Huron, Sanilac and Tuscola counties; 10% in the northern Lower Peninsula and Upper Peninsula; 9% in West Michigan; and 8% in Southeast Michigan.
- Approximately half of Michigan high school students, young adults and parents lack knowledge about the value and benefits that apprenticeships offer in Professional Trades, with only 13% of high schoolers considering apprenticeships a good career path option.

Advocates for careers in Professional Trades say Going PRO will help spur more people to consider exploring these “new collar” job opportunities.

“The technological advances happening every day in the skilled trades allow us to ensure these are not just jobs, but excellent careers for 21st-century success,” said Lee Graham, [Operating Engineers Local 324](#) Labor Management Education Committee executive director.

Michigan employers’ ability to find highly skilled and capable employees is more difficult than ever and is cited as a top concern in the most recent Michigan Future Business Index (MFBI) Survey. Business leaders from across Michigan since 2006 have participated in the semiannual MFBI Survey, sharing their perceptions of Michigan's economic outlook based on their personal experience.

A 2019 survey by the Associated General Contractors of America shows that almost 80% of Michigan respondents in that organization are facing difficulties hiring all or some salaried and hourly Professional Trades positions. More than 70% of the respondents anticipate their company’s workforce needs to increase, and 66% said it will continue to be hard to hire (45%) or harder to hire (21%) this year.

“We see first-hand the need to invest in the development, recruitment and retention of highly skilled employees,” said Mike VanGessel, [Rockford Construction](#) CEO. “Today’s construction industry offers highly rewarding, high-paying jobs, and we appreciate efforts to showcase these incredible opportunities. By working together to attract and build a modern workforce, we can continue moving our state’s economy in the right direction.”

Eight regional chambers of commerce – in Lansing, Detroit, Flint, Saginaw County, Ann Arbor/Ypsilanti, the Bay Area, Southwest Michigan and Grand Rapids – announced May 6 in a joint statement their support for bringing more Professional Trades talent into the state’s workforce.

“We’re all trying to do different things in our respective regions. But we’re all in agreement on supporting Going PRO and state policies encouraging more talent in the workforce,” said Tim Daman, Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce president and CEO.

Going PRO is designed to inform and inspire more prospective Professional Trades candidates than ever before in every region of the state, with 2019 events and activities planned in communities across Michigan.

The campaign is heralded as Michigan’s largest-ever awareness push dedicated to promoting Professional Trades. More than 90% of Michigan residents between ages 15 and 64 will experience Going PRO messaging in 2019 through social media platforms; earned media coverage; digital, TV and outdoor advertising; public forums; and other grassroots activities.

Among the highlights of today’s news conference was the introduction of the 30-second Going PRO TV commercial that will air statewide in 2019 and features an all-Michigan cast of workers and companies including [Dewpoint](#), [Lansing Board of Water & Light](#), [Lansing Community College Aviation Center](#), [McLaren Greater Lansing](#), Operating Engineers Local 324, Rockford Construction, [CA Hull](#) in Walled Lake, [Williams International](#) in Pontiac and [Wilson Talent Center](#) in Mason. Ted will continue to partner with Michigan employers and educators throughout the Going PRO campaign to promote their respective Professional Trades career openings, skilled training programs and apprenticeship opportunities.

To learn more about Professional Trades careers, visit the [Going PRO](#) website.