



## Michigan, Navy and Pentagon Announce Partnership to Train Workers for Defense Production

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From left: Sen. Gary Peters, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer and Carlos Del Toro, Secretary of the U.S. Navy applaud the announcement of the Michigan Maritime Manufacturing Initiative at Macomb Community College in Warren, on Monday, July 22, 2024. (Neo Hopkins/The Detroit News/TNS)

WARREN, Michigan — Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer joined Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro, the U.S. Department of Defense and the U.S. Department of Labor to announce Monday the launch of a \$50 million partnership focused on workforce training for defense manufacturing.

The Michigan Maritime Manufacturing Initiative, also known as M3, will train workers at local community colleges in skills for maritime construction, particularly welding and machining, officials said. The Biden-Harris Administration is strategically investing in Michigan as part of a national economic and defense policy initiative aimed at meeting the Navy's goal of increasing submarine production.

"This massive partnership between federal, state and local leaders will help Michigan build a workforce to lead the future of defense," Whitmer said during the announcement at Macomb Community College. "In short, it will help us get ship done."

Michigan's community colleges, including Macomb Community College and Oakland Community College, will serve as a resource for developing and providing advanced and technical training to address the Navy's manufacturing supplier chain's need for workers. Of the \$50 million, \$16 million will be used for an accelerated welding and computer numerical controlled machining training program to start this fall that will introduce a maritime-focused skilled trades pipeline.

The initiative also includes \$2 million toward educational outreach and engagement programs to provide K-12 students with hands-on career and technical education and generate an interest in maritime manufacturing careers.

"I can think of no better place than Michigan to shape the next generation of 'new-collar' workers, combining traditionally blue-collar trades with the cutting-edge technologies of today," Del Toro said. "Michiganders today, like during World War II, we need your skills, your dedication and your pioneering spirit to continue our legacy as the world's greatest naval power."

Whitmer said the initiative will also connect suppliers in Michigan to the broader submarine industrial base, whether they're existing suppliers for the Navy or auto suppliers looking to expand.

"As M3 takes root, training the next generation of workers sends a message to manufacturers across the nation- come to Michigan because we're here in Michigan," she said. "We are excellent making stuff, whether it's ships or semiconductor chips or potato chips."

Whitmer has said the state's defense industry contributes \$30 billion to the economy, supporting more than 166,000 jobs and nearly 4,000 businesses. She said Michigan produces more military vehicles than any other state.

She noted that Michigan is home to major defense companies including General Dynamics, BAE and GM Defense.

Other investments in the initiative announced Monday include up to \$10.75 million over five years in ACENet, which will increase a growing national hub-

and-spoke network of advanced machining training centers that trains users through computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacturing platforms, \$3 million for an attraction and recruitment campaign, and \$750,000 to collaborate with veteran placement agencies and the Department of Labor's Veteran Employment and Training Service programs to help transition veterans returning to Michigan to join the submarine and maritime sectors.

Michigan U.S. Sen. Gary Peters, a Democrat, noted the numerous suppliers in the aerospace industry, the increase in advanced manufacturing and autonomy, and the new program with the U.S. Navy.

"We have workers, we have engineers who are the best in the world," he said. "We know how to make things. We do it better than anywhere else and people are recognizing that and coming to our great state."

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