

# Opinion: Michigan's clean energy future depends on a skilled workforce

By Carla Walker-Miller

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Michigan stands at a crossroads. Our clean energy future is within reach, but only if we invest in the people who will build it.

By 2032, our state is projected to face a [shortage of more than 518,000 skilled trade jobs](#), with nearly 41,000 new roles opening each year. That's not just a workforce gap – it's a wake-up call. And we must take advantage of this powerful moment to reshape Michigan's economy and uplift communities that have long been left behind.

Across Michigan, older homes are in desperate need of energy efficiency upgrades. In Detroit, the average home is 70 years old, built long before modern energy standards.

Outdated infrastructure is creating a burden on homeowners, making energy bills more expensive. Upgrading these homes is critical to helping families save money – but there's one big challenge: we don't have enough certified professionals to do the work. Michigan already [ranks sixth in the nation](#) for clean energy jobs, according to Clean Jobs America. It's clear the career opportunities are here, but without a workforce knowledgeable in energy efficiency, we can't meet the growing demand for upgrades.

Now is the time to blend these two critical needs — upskilling Michigan's workforce for the future to fill good-paying skilled trades jobs and bringing our decades-old housing stock into the 21st century with updated insulation, HVAC systems and electrical. As we create career pathways, we must focus on sustained investment in people, from every zip code, every background and every walk of life.

In partnership with DTE Energy, we launched the [Energy Efficiency Academy](#) in 2023, a paid, on-the-job program in Detroit, Muskegon and Grand Rapids designed to train and certify the next generation of clean energy workers. Trainees earn \$16 per hour and more than 90% of graduates secure jobs with an average starting wage of \$25 per hour.

That's not just a paycheck — it's a pathway. In cities like Detroit, Escanaba and Saginaw, \$25 an hour can mean the difference between poverty and stability. It's a wage that invites people back into the workforce and gives families a fighting chance. When we invest in people, communities thrive. Families save money, workers gain

dignity and purpose, and local economies grow stronger. The clean energy future becomes a shared reality, not just a distant goal.

The Energy Efficiency Academy is just the beginning. With more partnerships, more training programs and more businesses stepping up, we can close the workforce gap, reduce energy burdens and ensure Michigan leads the way in clean energy innovation. Now is the time for us to come together and keep finding solutions for our state. The demand is here, the programs are successful and the chance to transform our economy and communities is within reach.

Let's build a future that works for everyone.

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