

Michigan State Bar Foundation Announces 2021 Award Winners

The Michigan State Bar Foundation's 2021 award recipients are **Janet Welch**, executive director of the State Bar of Michigan, and **Khalilah Spencer**, a partner at Honigman in Detroit. Welch is receiving the MSBF Founders Award, which recognizes a lawyer who exemplifies professional excellence and outstanding community contributions. Spencer is receiving the Access to Justice Award, which honors a person who significantly advances access to justice for low-income individuals in Michigan. The awards will be presented during the Michigan State Bar Foundation Fellows Reception on Sept. 22.



Janet Welch

Before becoming SBM executive director in 2007, Welch served as the Bar's general counsel for six years. Welch oversees the day-to-day operations of the Bar, implements policies set by the SBM Board of Commissioners and the Representative Assembly, and directs the efforts of the Bar's staff.

Welch has provided significant leadership in access to justice, including instituting the Judicial Crossroads Task Force, which created an in-depth report on ways to reform the state's justice system in the face of changing economics and demographics. She has participated on the Justice for All Task Force leadership team which led to the development of the Justice for All Commission. The 30-member commission aims to expand access to and enhance the quality of civil legal justice in Michigan. Welch is on the commission's executive team and co-chairs its Regulatory Reform Working Group with Michigan Supreme Court Justice Brian Zahra. She is also national expert on the future of the legal profession who regularly presents on topics related to innovation and technology.



Khalilah Spencer

Spencer serves as Honigman's inclusion, equity, and social responsibility partner. She also is an ex-officio member of Honigman's board of directors, chairs its Diversity and Inclusion Committee, and leads the firm's women and minority recruitment and community outreach efforts. She is also responsible for development and implementation of Honigman's pro bono and social responsibility programs.

Spencer helps lead the legal community in ensuring access to justice for underserved populations by serving on the Michigan State Bar Foundation Access to Justice Campaign Steering Committee and Statewide Fundraising Committee. She is also a member of the State Bar of Michigan Justice Initiative Committee and sits on the board of directors of Michigan Community Resources and Lakeshore Legal Aid. Her leadership, wisdom, and passion have been instrumental in increasing resources for civil legal aid.

"The Michigan State Bar Foundation is very pleased to recognize the contributions of Janet Welch and Khalilah Spencer," MSBF President Edward Pappas said. "I have had the privilege to work closely with Ms. Welch and Ms. Spencer, and I am inspired by their leadership on access to justice and commitment to the profession."

The Michigan State Bar Foundation, a 501(c)(3) entity independent of the State Bar of Michigan, provides leadership and grants to improve access for all in the justice system, including support for civil legal aid to the poor, law-related education, and conflict resolution. For more information, visit www.msbf.org.