



## **For Immediate Release**

For more information, contact:

Jim Townsend at [jimtownsend@wayne.edu](mailto:jimtownsend@wayne.edu) (248) 342-5253

Suba Perumal at [suba@wayne.edu](mailto:suba@wayne.edu) (248-574-1538)

# **Levin Center at Wayne Law Cautions Michigan Legislature to Ensure that COVID-19 Oversight Committee Be Fully Bipartisan and Fact-Based**

## **STATEMENT OF LEVIN CENTER DIRECTOR JIM TOWNSEND**

The recent announcement that the Michigan legislature is considering establishing an oversight committee to look into Michigan's response to COVID-19 is a welcome one, provided the committee conducts itself in a thoroughly bipartisan manner with a commitment to the facts. To do otherwise, to engage in a partisan inquiry, would be a misuse of taxpayer dollars at a time when every dollar spent is particularly precious.

The Levin Center is dedicated to promoting and advancing fact-based, in-depth, bipartisan oversight. We have conducted trainings with congressional and state staff and have developed various resources for legislatures to use when conducting oversight. And we have distilled the essential elements necessary for effective, bipartisan, fact-based oversight. Those elements are:

- Joint decisions on the subject of the investigation, including what topics to address in what order
- Joint document requests and open access to all documents received
- Joint decisions on whom to interview in what order and joint interviews
- Joint hearing design
- Joint press releases and joint website
- Joint reports.

As the Michigan legislature develops the plan and program for an oversight committee, the Levin Center urges it to incorporate these elements into the operations of the committee.

We also urge the committee to make state government contracts for supplies and services a primary area of inquiry. The Department of Justice recently announced that it expects a rise in fraud in COVID response programs since they're being put in place so



quickly. History has shown that legislative committees can do a great deal to uncover waste and fraud during times of national crisis. The Truman committee during the Second World War made a major contribution to the war effort by uncovering fraudulent and mismanaged government contracts. Given that so much of the COVID response will occur at the state level, it is incumbent on the state legislature to conduct robust oversight of these programs and expenditures.

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