

NEWS RELEASE

Students engage with county government, elected officials during the Board's first-ever virtual Youth in Government Day

Oakland County Commission's annual event safely connects students with county government

February 4, 2021, OAKLAND COUNTY, MI. – Yesterday, the Oakland County Board of Commissioners partnered with MSU Extension 4-H to welcome more than 70 high school students from across the county for Youth in Government Day. Traditionally hosted on the Oakland County campus, this year's event was reformatted to connect students with county leadership while remaining physically distant. Students participated in mock debates, spoke with elected officials and learned more about the role county government plays in their lives and communities.

"Today's young citizens are tomorrow's leaders and decision-makers," Commissioner **Kristen Nelson** (D-Waterford), who helped emcee the event, said. "With all the changes and challenges students have endured over the past 12 months, it was really great hearing their perspectives on important issues and seeing them actively participating in the legislative process!"

Youth in Government Day featured interactive sessions facilitated by the MSU Extension 4-H Leadership & Civic Engagement team, who challenged students to think critically about media consumption, complex legislative issues and the role of local government in their lives. The topic of this year's mock debate was particularly timely as students discussed the pros and cons of requiring COVID-19 vaccines for school students and staff.

"Many people are feeling disenfranchised by our current political process, particularly at the national level," Darren Bagley, an educator with MSU Extension 4-H who facilitated sessions during the event, said. "The Oakland County Youth in Government program hopes to engage young people in understanding those processes at the local level, so they can be better engaged and informed citizens, today and in the future."

Attendees also heard from their countywide elected officials and participated in a Q&A session with County Executive David Coulter, Clerk/Register of Deeds Lisa Brown, Sheriff Michael J. Bouchard, Treasurer Andy Meisner and Water Resources Commissioner Jim Nash.

After asking the countywide elected officials questions, students switched roles. Several Oakland County commissioners participated in a reverse Q&A, where they asked the students questions in an effort to better understand the issues that matter to some of their youngest constituents.

“Youth in Government Day is a highlight of the year for many of our commissioners, including myself,” Chairman **David T. Woodward** (D-Royal Oak), said. “It was inspiring to hear our participants' thoughtful conversations about everything from vaccines to their local communities. We hope this event, and the inside look at county government that it gives students, encourages young people to make positive change in Oakland County and beyond.”

Since the 1970s, Youth in Government Day has aimed to help develop young adults into future leaders. Today, the event continues to connect students with local government and works to emphasize the idea that they are never too young to be involved or to make a difference. Youth in Government Day encourages Oakland County youth to understand and participate in the politics and policies that impact their lives and communities.

For more information about Youth in Government Day, visit www.oakgov.com/yigd. For more information about the Board of Commissioners, visit www.oakgov.com/boc or call 248-858-0100.

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