



Date Mailed: July 10, 2025

Docket No.: 25-014594

Case No.: [REDACTED]

Petitioner: [REDACTED]

This is an important legal document. Please have someone translate the document.

هذه وثيقة قانونية مهمة. يرجى أن يكون هناك شخص ما يترجم المستند.

এটি একটি গুরুত্বপূর্ণ আইনি ডকুমেন্ট। দয়া করে কেউ দস্তাবেজ অনুবাদ করুন।

Este es un documento legal importante. Por favor, que alguien traduzca el documento.

这是一份重要的法律文件。请让别人翻译文件。

Ky është një dokument ligjor i rëndësishëm. Ju lutem, kini dikë ta përktheni dokumentin.

[REDACTED] MI [REDACTED]

Date Mailed: July 10, 2025

Docket No.: 25-014594

Case No.: [REDACTED]

Petitioner: [REDACTED]

HEARING DECISION

Following Petitioner's request for a hearing, this matter is before the undersigned Administrative Law Judge pursuant to MCL 400.9 and 400.37; 42 CFR 431.200 to 431.250; and 45 CFR 205.10. After due notice, a telephone hearing was held on May 22, 2025, from Lansing, Michigan. [REDACTED], Petitioner, appeared on her own behalf. The Department was represented by Jennipher Wheeler, Family Independence Manager (FIM).

During the hearing proceeding, the Department's Hearing Summary packets were admitted as Exhibit A, pp. 1-84 and Exhibit B, pp. 1-468.

ISSUE

Whether the Department properly determined that Petitioner was not disabled for purposes of the State Disability Assistance (SDA) benefit program?

FINDINGS OF FACT

The Administrative Law Judge, based on the competent, material, and substantial evidence on the whole record, finds as material fact:

1. On [REDACTED] 2024, Petitioner applied for SDA. (Exhibit A, pp. 79-84)
2. On March 11, 2025, the Medical Review Team/Disability Determination Services (MRT/DDS) found Petitioner not disabled. (Exhibit A, pp. 16-17 and 49-59)
3. On March 12, 2025, a Notice of Case Action was issued stating SDA was denied because Petitioner was found not disabled. (Exhibit A, pp. 11-14)
4. On April 16, 2025, the Department received Petitioner's timely written request for hearing. (Exhibit A, pp. 4-6)
5. Petitioner alleged disabling impairments including bipolar 1, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, personality disorder, lumbar disk disease with radiculopathy, sciatic nerve problem, headaches, history of thyroid surgery with

25-014594

ongoing monitoring, vitamin D deficiency, asthma, gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), and diabetes (Exhibit A, p. 20; Petitioner Testimony).

6. At the time of hearing, Petitioner was [REDACTED] years old with a [REDACTED] 1981 birth date; was [REDACTED] in height; and weighed [REDACTED] pounds. (Petitioner Testimony)
7. Petitioner completed the 12th grade, attended some college, and has a work history including part time cashier/stocking jobs and temporary factory jobs. (Exhibit A, p. 23; Petitioner Testimony)
8. Petitioner's impairments have lasted, or are expected to last, continuously for a period of 90 days or longer.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

Department policies are contained in the Department of Health and Human Services Bridges Administrative Manual (BAM), Department of Health and Human Services Bridges Eligibility Manual (BEM), and Department of Human Services Reference Tables Manual (RFT).

The Medical Assistance (MA) program is established by Title XIX of the Social Security Act, 42 USC 1396-1396w-5; 42 USC 1315; the Affordable Care Act of 2010, the collective term for the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, Pub. L. No. 111-148, as amended by the Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act of 2010, Pub. L. No. 111-152; and 42 CFR 430.10-.25. The Department (formerly known as the Department of Human Services) administers the MA program pursuant to 42 CFR 435, MCL 400.10, and MCL 400.105-.112k.

The State Disability Assistance (SDA) program, which provides financial assistance for disabled persons, was established by 2004 PA 344. The Department administers the SDA program pursuant to 42 CFR 435, MCL 400.10 *et seq.* and Mich Admin Code, Rules 400.3151 – 400.3180. A person is considered disabled for SDA purposes if the person has a physical or mental impairment which meets federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI) disability standards for at least ninety days. Receipt of SSI benefits based on disability or blindness, or the receipt of MA benefits based on disability or blindness, automatically qualifies an individual as disabled for purposes of the SDA program.

Disability is defined as the inability to do any substantial gainful activity by reason of any medically determinable physical or mental impairment which can be expected to result in death, or which has lasted or can be expected to last for a continuous period of not less than 12 months. 20 CFR 416.905(a). The person claiming a physical or mental disability has the burden to establish it through the use of competent medical evidence

from qualified medical sources such as his or her medical history, clinical/laboratory findings, diagnosis/prescribed treatment, prognosis for recovery and/or medical assessment of ability to do work-related activities or ability to reason and make appropriate mental adjustments, if a mental disability is alleged. 20 CFR 416.913. An individual's statements about pain or other symptoms are not, in and of themselves, sufficient to establish disability. 20 CFR 416.929(a). Similarly, conclusory statements by a physician or mental health professional that an individual is disabled or blind, absent supporting medical evidence, is insufficient to establish disability. 20 CFR 416.927.

When determining disability, the federal regulations require several factors to be considered including: (1) daily activities; (2) the location/duration/frequency/intensity of an applicant's pain or other symptoms; (3) precipitating and aggravating factors; (4) the type/dosage/effectiveness/side effects of any medication the applicant takes to relieve pain or other symptoms; (5) any treatment other than medication that the applicant has received to relieve pain or other symptoms; (6) any measures the applicant uses to relieve pain or other symptoms; and (7) other factors concerning the applicant's functional limitations and restrictions due to pain or other symptoms. 20 CFR 416.929(c)(3). The applicant's pain or other symptoms must be considered in light of the objective medical evidence presented. 20 CFR 416.929(c)(2).

In order to determine whether or not an individual is disabled, federal regulations require a five-step sequential evaluation process be utilized. 20 CFR 416.920(a)(1). The five-step analysis requires the trier of fact to consider an individual's current work activity; the severity of the impairment(s) both in duration and whether it meets or equals a listed impairment in Appendix 1; residual functional capacity to determine whether an individual can perform past relevant work; and residual functional capacity along with vocational factors (i.e., age, education, and work experience) to determine if an individual can adjust to other work. 20 CFR 416.920(a)(4); 20 CFR 416.945.

If an individual is found disabled, or not disabled, at any step, a determination or decision is made with no need to evaluate subsequent steps. 20 CFR 416.920(a)(4). If a determination cannot be made that an individual is disabled, or not disabled, at a particular step, the next step is required. 20 CFR 416.920(a)(4). If an impairment does not meet or equal a listed impairment, an individual's residual functional capacity is assessed before moving from step three to step four. 20 CFR 416.920(a)(4); 20 CFR 416.945. Residual functional capacity is the most an individual can do despite the limitations based on all relevant evidence. 20 CFR 416.945(a)(1). An individual's residual functional capacity assessment is evaluated at both steps four and five. 20 CFR 416.920(a)(4). In determining disability, an individual's functional capacity to perform basic work activities is evaluated and if found that the individual has the ability to perform basic work activities without significant limitation, disability will not be found.

20 CFR 416.994(b)(1)(iv). In general, the individual has the responsibility to prove disability. 20 CFR 416.912(a). An impairment or combination of impairments is not severe if it does not significantly limit an individual's physical or mental ability to do basic work activities. 20 CFR 416.922(a). The individual has the responsibility to provide evidence of prior work experience; efforts to work; and any other factor showing how the impairment affects the ability to work. 20 CFR 416.912(a)(1)(iv)(vi)(vii).

As outlined above, the first step looks at the individual's current work activity. In the record presented, Petitioner is not involved in substantial gainful activity. Therefore, Petitioner is not ineligible for disability benefits under Step 1.

The severity of Petitioner's alleged impairment(s) is considered under Step 2. Petitioner bears the burden to present sufficient objective medical evidence to substantiate the alleged disabling impairments. In order to be considered disabled for MA purposes, the impairment must be severe. 20 CFR 416.920(a)(4)(ii); 20 CFR 416.920(c). An impairment, or combination of impairments, is severe if it significantly limits an individual's physical or mental ability to do basic work activities regardless of age, education, and work experience. 20 CFR 416.920(a)(4)(ii); 20 CFR 416.920(c). Basic work activities means the abilities and aptitudes necessary to do most jobs. 20 CFR 416.922(b). Examples include:

1. Physical functions such as walking, standing, sitting, lifting, pushing, pulling, reaching, carrying, or handling;
2. Capacities for seeing, hearing, and speaking;
3. Understanding, carrying out, and remembering simple instructions;
4. Use of judgment;
5. Responding appropriately to supervision, co-workers and usual work situations; and
6. Dealing with changes in a routine work setting.

Id.

The second step allows for dismissal of a disability claim obviously lacking in medical merit. *Higgs v Bowen*, 880 F2d 860, 862 (CA 6, 1988). The severity requirement may still be employed as an administrative convenience to screen out claims that are totally groundless solely from a medical standpoint. *Id.* At 863 *citing Farris v Sec of Health and Human Services*, 773 F2d 85, 90 n.1 (CA 6, 1985). An impairment qualifies as non-severe only if, regardless of a Petitioner's age, education, or work experience, the impairment would not affect the Petitioner's ability to work. *Salmi v Sec of Health and Human Services*, 774 F2d 685, 692 (CA 6, 1985).

In the present case, Petitioner alleged disabling impairments including bipolar I, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, personality disorder, lumbar disk disease with radiculopathy, sciatic nerve problem, headaches, history of thyroid surgery with ongoing monitoring, vitamin D deficiency, asthma, gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), and diabetes (Exhibit A, p. 20; Petitioner Testimony). While some older medical records were submitted and have been reviewed, the focus of this analysis will be on the more recent medical evidence.

August 7, 2024 to September 30, 2024 records from ██████████ document diagnoses of generalized anxiety disorder, and PTSD. Impacts on functioning were noted to be with: ability to cope with and manage crisis events and significant stressors; ability to complete daily self-care tasks; emotional functioning; motivation; self-esteem and social interactions which cause relational distress; finances; and physical health. Regression regarding progress in treatment was noted in many of the progress notes. (Exhibit B, pp. 324-334 and 358-370)

An October 8, 2024 record from ██████████ ██████████ documents recent treatment of multiple conditions including: neck pain; thoracic back pain; low back pain; somatic dysfunction of cranium, thoracic region, lumbar region, sacral region, pelvic region, lower limb, upper limb, rib, and abdominal region; cervical somatic dysfunction, and headache all with an onset date of July 17, 2024. The chief complaint for this visit was lumbar disc disease with radiculopathy. On physical exam gait and station were normal. There were deficits such as muscle weakness, dermatomal numbness, and reflex changes. (Exhibit B, pp. 156-162)

On ██████████ 2024, Petitioner had an ultrasound of the pelvis, which showed a multifibroid uterus including a 1.7 cm fibroid of the right. A history of fibroids and removal in January 2024 was noted. (Exhibit B, pp. 145-146 and 307).

June 18, 2024 to December 11, 2024 records from ██████████ ██████████ documents diagnosis and treatment for multiple conditions including prediabetes, lipid disorder, bipolar 1 disorder, asthma, uterine fibroid, and vitamin D deficiency. The

assessment/plan sections frequently indicated Petitioner should exercise and walk. (Exhibit B, pp. 240-283, 303-306, 314-319).

On [REDACTED] 2024, Petitioner had an MRI of the lumbar spine. The impression was early spondylitic changes at the L5-S1 level with intervertebral disc desiccation and a very shallow broad based posterior disc bulge. There was no central canal stenosis or foraminal narrowing. (Exhibit B, pp. 163-164 and 416-438)

November 18, 2024 to December 18, 2024 records from [REDACTED] document diagnoses of bipolar and related disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, trauma and stressor related disorder, and PTSD. Impacts on functioning were noted to be with: ability to cope with and manage crisis events and significant stressors; ability to complete daily self-care tasks; emotional functioning; motivation; self-esteem; finances; social interactions which cause relational distress; physical health; and occupational functioning. Regression regarding progress in treatment was noted in many of the progress notes. The December 18, 2024 record notes severe regression regarding progress in treatment as evidenced in anxiety. (Exhibit B, pp. 347-357).

As previously noted, Petitioner bears the burden to present sufficient objective medical evidence to substantiate the alleged disabling impairment(s). As summarized above, Petitioner has presented medical evidence establishing that she does have some limitations on the ability to perform basic work activities. The medical evidence has established that Petitioner has an impairment, or combination thereof, that has more than a *de minimis* effect on Petitioner's basic work activities. Further, the impairments have lasted, or can be expected to last, continuously for 90 days; therefore, Petitioner is not disqualified from receipt of SDA benefits under Step 2.

In the third step of the sequential analysis of a disability claim, the trier of fact must determine if Petitioner's impairment, or combination of impairments, is listed in Appendix 1 of Subpart P of 20 CFR, Part 404.

The evidence confirms recent diagnosis and treatment of multiple impairments including: lumbar disc disease with radiculopathy; thoracic back pain, low back pain; somatic dysfunction of cranium, thoracic region, lumbar region, sacral region, pelvic region, lower limb, upper limb, rib, and abdominal region; cervical somatic dysfunction; headache; prediabetes; lipid disorder; asthma; uterine fibroid; vitamin D deficiency; bipolar disorder; generalized anxiety disorder; trauma and stressor related disorder; and PTSD. Based on the objective medical evidence, considered listings included: 1.15 disorders of the skeletal spine resulting in compromise of a nerve root(s); 1.16 lumbar spinal stenosis resulting in compromise of the cauda equina; 12.04 depressive, bipolar, and related disorders; 12.06 anxiety and obsessive compulsive disorders; and 12.15 trauma and stressor related disorders. The medical evidence was not sufficient to meet

25-014594

the intent and severity requirements of any of these listings, or any other listing, or its equivalent. For example, the records did not document the D criteria of listing 1.15 or 1.16 the B criteria of listings 12.04, 12.06, and 12.15. Accordingly, Petitioner cannot be found disabled, or not disabled at Step 3; therefore, Petitioner's eligibility is considered under Step 4. 20 CFR 416.905(a).

Before considering the fourth step in the sequential analysis, a determination of the individual's residual functional capacity ("RFC") is made. 20 CFR 416.945. An individual's RFC is the most he/she can still do on a sustained basis despite the limitations from the impairment(s). *Id.* The total limiting effects of all the impairments, to include those that are not severe, are considered. 20 CFR 416.945(c).

To determine the physical demands (exertional requirements) of work in the national economy, jobs are classified as sedentary, light, medium, heavy, and very heavy. 20 CFR 416.967. Sedentary work involves lifting of no more than 10 pounds at a time and occasionally lifting or carrying articles like docket files, ledgers, and small tools. 20 CFR 416.967(a). Although a sedentary job is defined as one which involves sitting, a certain amount of walking and standing is often necessary in carrying out job duties. *Id.* Jobs are sedentary if walking and standing are required occasionally, and other sedentary criteria are met. Light work involves lifting no more than 20 pounds at a time with frequent lifting or carrying objects weighing up to 10 pounds. 20 CFR 416.967(b). Even though weight lifted may be very little, a job is in this category when it requires a good deal of walking or standing, or when it involves sitting most of the time with some pushing and pulling of arm or leg controls. *Id.* To be considered capable of performing a full or wide range of light work, an individual must have the ability to do substantially all of these activities. *Id.* An individual capable of light work is also capable of sedentary work unless there are additionally limiting factors such as loss of fine dexterity or inability to sit for long periods of time. *Id.* Medium work involves lifting no more than 50 pounds at a time with frequent lifting or carrying of objects weighing up to 25 pounds. 20 CFR 416.967(c). An individual capable of performing medium work is also capable of light and sedentary work. *Id.* Heavy work involves lifting no more than 100 pounds at a time with frequent lifting or carrying of objects weighing up to 50 pounds. 20 CFR 416.967(d). An individual capable of heavy work is also capable of medium, light, and sedentary work. *Id.* Finally, very heavy work involves lifting objects weighing more than 100 pounds at a time with frequent lifting or carrying objects weighing 50 pounds or more. 20 CFR 416.967(c). An individual capable of very heavy work is able to perform work under all categories. *Id.*

Limitations or restrictions which affect the ability to meet the demands of jobs other than strength demands (exertional requirements, i.e., sitting, standing, walking, lifting, carrying, pushing, or pulling) are considered non-exertional. 20 CFR 416.969a(a). In considering whether an individual can perform past relevant work, individual's residual

functional capacity is compared with the demands of past relevant work. *Id.* If an individual can no longer do past relevant work, the same residual functional capacity assessment, along with an individual's age, education, and work experience is considered to determine whether an individual can adjust to other work which exists in the national economy. *Id.* Examples of non-exertional limitations or restrictions include difficulty to function due to nervousness, anxiousness, or depression; difficulty maintaining attention or concentration; difficulty understanding or remembering detailed instructions; difficulty in seeing or hearing; difficulty tolerating some physical feature(s) of certain work settings (i.e. can't tolerate dust or fumes); or difficulty performing the manipulative or postural functions of some work such as reaching, handling, stooping, climbing, crawling, or crouching. 20 CFR 416.969a(c)(1)(i) – (vi). If the impairment(s) and related symptoms, such as pain, only affect the ability to perform the non-exertional aspects of work-related activities, the rules in Appendix 2 do not direct factual conclusions of disabled or not disabled. 20 CFR 416.969a(c)(2). The determination of whether disability exists is based upon the principles in the appropriate sections of the regulations, giving consideration to the rules for specific case situations in Appendix 2. *Id.*

The evidence confirms recent diagnosis and treatment of multiple impairments including: lumbar disc disease with radiculopathy; thoracic back pain, low back pain; somatic dysfunction of cranium, thoracic region, lumbar region, sacral region, pelvic region, lower limb, upper limb, rib, and abdominal region; cervical somatic dysfunction; headache; prediabetes; lipid disorder; asthma; uterine fibroid; vitamin D deficiency; bipolar disorder; generalized anxiety disorder; trauma and stressor related disorder; and PTSD. Petitioner's testimony indicated she can walk 5 minutes at least, stand less than 10 minutes, sit less than 10 minutes, and cannot even lift a full gallon of milk. Petitioner indicated she has difficulties with bending/stooping/squatting, and stairs. Petitioner described some difficulties with using her hands, such as writing for too long and with tying shoes. Petitioner also described difficulties with very snappy moods, being very argumentative, situational/environmental triggers, getting along with other people, being around groups of people, handling stress, anxiety attacks, crying spells, flash backs, memory issues, and trouble concentrating and focusing. (Petitioner Testimony). Petitioner's testimony is somewhat supported by the medical records and is found partially credible. However, the records do not support the degree of the limitations Petitioner described. For example, the records noted a normal gait and station and that Petitioner should exercise and walk.

After review of the entire record it is found, at this point, that Petitioner has a combination of exertional and non-exertional limitations and maintains the residual functional capacity to perform limited light work as defined by 20 CFR 416.967(b) on a sustained basis. Limitations would include avoiding extreme temperature and vibration

as well as hazards, and simple routine tasks in a low stress setting requiring no more than occasional interaction with others.

The fourth step in analyzing a disability claim requires an assessment of the Petitioner's residual functional capacity ("RFC") and past relevant employment. 20 CFR 416.920(a)(4)(iv). An individual is not disabled if he/she can perform past relevant work. *Id.*; 20 CFR 416.960(b)(3). Past relevant work is work that has been performed within the past 15 years that was a substantial gainful activity and that lasted long enough for the individual to learn the position. 20 CFR 416.960(b)(1). Vocational factors of age, education, and work experience, and whether the past relevant employment exists in significant numbers in the national economy is considered. 20 CFR 416.960(b)(3).

Petitioner has a work history including part time cashier/stocking jobs and temporary factory jobs. (Exhibit A, p. 23; Petitioner Testimony). In light of the entire record and Petitioner's RFC (see above), it is found that Petitioner is not able to perform any past relevant full time work. Accordingly, Petitioner cannot be found disabled, or not disabled, at Step 4; therefore, the Petitioner's eligibility is considered under Step 5. 20 CFR 416.905(a).

In Step 5, an assessment of Petitioner's residual functional capacity and age, education, and work experience is considered to determine whether an adjustment to other work can be made. 20 CFR 416.920(4)(v). At the time of the hearing, Petitioner was ■ years old and, thus, considered to be a younger individual for disability purposes. Petitioner completed the 12th grade and has a work history including part time cashier/stocking jobs and temporary factory jobs. (Exhibit A, p. 23; Petitioner Testimony). Disability is found if an individual is unable to adjust to other work. *Id.* At this point in the analysis, the burden shifts from the Petitioner to the Department to present proof that the Petitioner has the residual capacity to substantial gainful employment. 20 CFR 416.960(2); *Richardson v Sec of Health and Human Services*, 735 F2d 962, 964 (CA 6, 1984). While a vocational expert is not required, a finding supported by substantial evidence that the individual has the vocational qualifications to perform specific jobs is needed to meet the burden. *O'Banner v Sec of Health and Human Services*, 587 F2d 321, 323 (CA 6, 1978). Medical-Vocational guidelines found at 20 CFR Subpart P, Appendix II, may be used to satisfy the burden of proving that the individual can perform specific jobs in the national economy. *Heckler v Campbell*, 461 US 458, 467 (1983); *Kirk v Secretary*, 667 F2d 524, 529 (CA 6, 1981) *cert den* 461 US 957 (1983).

As noted above, Petitioner has a combination of exertional and non-exertional limitations and maintains the residual functional capacity to perform limited light work as defined by 20 CFR 416.967(b) on a sustained basis. Limitations would include avoiding extreme temperature and vibration as well as hazards, and simple routine tasks in a low

stress setting requiring no more than occasional interaction with others. Significant jobs would still exist despite these limitations.

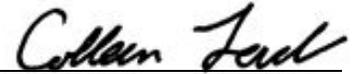
After review of the entire record, and in consideration of Petitioner's age, education, work experience, RFC, and using Medical Vocation Rule 202.13 as a guide, Petitioner is found not disabled at Step 5.

In this case, Petitioner is found not disabled for purposes of SDA benefits, as the objective medical evidence does not establish a physical and/or mental impairment that met the federal SSI disability standard with the shortened duration of 90 days. In light of the foregoing, it is found that Petitioner's impairments did not preclude work at the above stated level for at least 90 days.

The Administrative Law Judge, based on the above Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, and for the reasons stated on the record, if any, finds Petitioner not disabled for purposes of the SDA benefit program.

DECISION AND ORDER

Accordingly, the Department's determination is **AFFIRMED**.



COLLEEN LACK
ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE

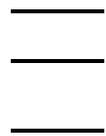
APPEAL RIGHTS: Petitioner may appeal this Hearing Decision to the circuit court. Rules for appeals to the circuit court can be found in the Michigan Court Rules (MCR), including MCR 7.101 to MCR 7.123, available at the Michigan Courts website at courts.michigan.gov. The Michigan Office of Administrative Hearings and Rules (MOAHR) cannot provide legal advice, but assistance may be available through the State Bar of Michigan at <https://irs.michbar.org> or Michigan Legal Help at <https://michiganlegalhelp.org>. A copy of the circuit court appeal should be sent to MOAHR. A circuit court appeal may result in a reversal of the Hearing Decision.

Either party who disagrees with this Hearing Decision may also send a written request for a rehearing and/or reconsideration to MOAHR within 30 days of the mailing date of this Hearing Decision. The request should include Petitioner's name, the docket number from page 1 of this Hearing Decision, an explanation of the

specific reasons for the request, and any documents supporting the request. The request should be sent to MOAHR _____

- by email to MOAHR-BSD-Support@michigan.gov, **OR** _____
- by fax at (517) 763-0155, **OR**
- by mail addressed to
Michigan Office of Administrative Hearings and Rules
Rehearing/Reconsideration Request
P.O. Box 30639
Lansing Michigan 48909-8139

Documents sent via email are not secure and can be faxed or mailed to avoid any potential risks. Requests MOAHR receives more than 30 days from the mailing date of this Hearing Decision may be considered untimely and dismissed.



Via Electronic Mail:

Respondent

MUSKEGON COUNTY DHHS
2700 BAKER ST
PO BOX 4290
MUSKEGON HEIGHTS, MI 49444
MDHHS-MUSKEGON-HEARING@michigan.gov

Interested Parties

L. KARADSHEH
BSC3

Via First Class Mail:

Petitioner

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] MI [REDACTED]