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TO: Honorable Detroit City Council

FROM: David Whitaker, Director
Legislative Policy Division
DATE: February 10, 2026
RE: **Request for information on Notaries Public in Detroit and Services for Low Income Residents**

City Council Member Mary Waters has requested the Legislative Policy Division (LPD) provide information regarding Notaries Public in Detroit and Services for Low Income Residents. In response to this request, we submit the following report. If we can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact our office.

Specifically, Council Member Waters requested the following:

1. The total number of active notaries licensed in the City of Detroit.
2. Information on what no-cost service exists for seniors and low-income Detroiters, as well as those who struggle with mobility, to access notary services for important documents.

Notaries Public play a crucial role in protecting the public by safeguarding the integrity of legal documents, promoting trust, and ensuring that important transactions are carried out lawfully and transparently. Notaries are responsible for verifying a person's identity, confirming that the individual is aware of what they are going to sign, and making sure individuals are not pressured into signing documents.

There is no testing requirement to become a Notary Public. However, one must be at least 18 years of age to apply, reside, or work in Michigan, be a United States citizen or legal resident, live or work in the County in which they are applying in, read, write, and understand English. The applicant must not have any

disqualifying offences on their record. Additionally, anyone applying is required to read the Michigan Notary Public Act and sign a declaration stating they have read the act.¹

An applicant must then file an application and \$10,000 surety bond (which typically cost \$50-\$100) with the County Clerk's office.² Once the application and surety bond are submitted to the County Clerk's office, the applicant shall pay the application fee, take the oath of office, mail in the application and filing fee to the Michigan Department of State. If approved, the state will issue the notary commission certificate.

According to the Michigan Department of State, the State of Michigan commissions about 1,300 notaries public each month, with over 113,000 notaries currently commissioned in the state of Michigan.³ The actual number of active notaries in the city of Detroit is difficult to determine because notary licenses are issued based upon the county one applies in, not the city. In addition, requirements state the applicant can live or work in the county in which they apply in. Therefore, a licensed notary might not necessarily live in the county where they are certified to perform notary duties. According to the Michigan Department of State, there are over five thousand active licensed notaries public in Wayne County.

In Michigan, the maximum fee that can be charged for a notary public for a single notarial act is \$10.00, while Remote Online Notarization services may cost more, often around \$31 per session.⁴ Additional travel fees may be charged if agreed upon in advance, with mobile notaries charging the base \$10.00 fee, plus travel fees (e.g., \$25-\$45+).⁵

Community and legal aid organizations often provide free legal help and sometimes notarization assistance or can refer individuals to low-cost notaries. Here in Detroit, the William Booth Legal Aid Clinic provides no cost notary services to qualifying individuals.⁶ Certain local government offices offer notary services and may charge as little as \$1.00 per signature. While many banks and credit unions often offer notarizations free for customers. Although our Detroit Public Libraries do not offer notary services⁷, several Michigan library systems offer free notarizations by appointment. Even if a legal aid provider does not directly notarize documents, they often host legal help clinics where free notaries are temporarily available. In addition, some community centers and nonprofit organizations periodically host free notary days, especially around tax season or legal aid events.⁸

There does not appear to be a shortage of notaries in Wayne County. The maximum allowable charge of \$10.00 for a single notarial act is not free, nor is it exorbitant. Many Detroiters are low-income. They lack reliable transportation and bank accounts, making it impossible to access free or low-cost notary services. Notary services need to be made more accessible to low-income residents, seniors, and the disabled.

Due to the low cost of providing the actual notary service, a modest allocation of funds for the purpose of certifying city employees as notary publics and providing free notary services to citizens through our Detroit Public Libraries and recreation centers could go a long way to promote wider access to these services.

¹ [Notary services](#)

² Michigan.gov

³ [Notary services](#)

⁴ www.michigannotarypublic.com

⁵ Facebook.com What do you charge for travel fees as a notary public in Michigan

⁶ William Booth Legal Aid, Phone Call 2/5/2026

⁷ Detroit Public Library, Phone Call 2/5/2026

⁸ Michigan.gov