



SEIU 517M
PUBLIC EMPLOYEES

The **E-Former**

The Official Electronic Newsletter of
SEIU Local 517M

November 2021

Staff Directory

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Human Services Support Unit Contract Ratification Vote Ends November 5th

If you haven't had the opportunity to cast your vote in the 2021 HSS Contract Ratification Election, please take a few minutes to do so now. When you click on the link below you will be able to review the tentative agreement summary and cast your vote. The voting period will end at 4:00 p.m. on Friday, November 5, 2021.

[Review Tentative Agreement and Vote Now](#)

Scientific and Engineering Unit Contract Ratification Vote Ends November 18th

If you haven't submitted your vote in the 2021 Scientific and Engineering Contract Ratification Election, please take a few minutes to do so now. [Click to review the agreement summary and cast your vote.](#) The voting period will end on Thursday, November 18, 2021.

Ratification informational meetings continue throughout the voting period. You will receive an email with login information for your specific meeting. The remaining meetings are:

All Lansing MDOT members can attend either November 2nd or 3rd
Tuesday, November 2nd - 12:00 noon – 1:00 p.m.
Wednesday, November 3rd - 12:00 noon – 1:00 p.m.

LARA and Downtown Lansing - Chapters 9 & 26
Thursday, November 4th - 12:00 noon – 1:00 p.m.

All Metro Detroit - Chapter 19
Monday, November 8th – 12:00 noon – 1:00 p.m.

All Con Hall members can attend either November 9th or 10th
Tuesday, November 9th - 12:00 noon – 1:00 p.m.
Wednesday, November 10th - 12:00 noon – 1:00 p.m.

SE Michigan Office/Cadillac Place – Chapters 20 & 22
Tuesday, November 16th - 12:00 noon – 1:00 p.m.

Open Meetings if your scheduled meeting time doesn't work for you:
Open Meeting #2- Tuesday, November 16th – 5:00 pm – 6:00 p.m.
Open Meeting #3- Wednesday, November 17th – Noon – 1:00 p.m.

STAND TOGETHER — STAND STRONG

www.seiu517m.org [Facebook at: SEIULocal517M](#)

Members at Memphis Community Schools Secure Major Contract Gains

By Dominic Barbato, Labor Relations Specialist

SEIU 517M members at Memphis Community Schools recently completed negotiations on a wage reopener for their current contract. Working together, they were able to secure wage increases of 18%-20% for this school year. “The negotiations were not a walk in the park”, said Stacey Trombley, a member of the bargaining team. “The hard work, commitment to obtaining wages that were more in line with other districts in our area, and not backing down led us to be successful at the bargaining table”. The raise represents the largest increase for the unit in many years. “The excitement of obtaining a good raise has our members excited and united”, said Trombley.

In addition to contract gains, the membership has taken this event as an opportunity to reengage with their union. At the beginning of the campaign, the unit stood at 28% membership. Leaders in the group engaged with people one on one and built their unit up to well past majority. Trombley added that working to “build membership in our unit brought everyone together and has made our unit not only stronger, but everyone is united. We have never had that in our building before and we now have over 70% membership”.

State Employee Benefits Open Enrollment Period is Winding Down

Benefits Open Enrollment (BOE) for state employees ends November 9th. The coverage period is January 1, 2022 through December 31, 2022. All deductibles and out-of-pocket maximums reset on January 1, 2022.

Members are strongly encouraged to review their benefit elections each year, but you do not need to re-enroll each year to retain your existing insurance coverages for health, dental, vision, life, or disability. Flexible Spending Accounts (FSA) covering health care or dependent care do not automatically renew each year. Members will have to renew every year if they wish to participate in that coverage option.

There are no new plan options for this open-enrollment period, however, there are some changes in benefit levels so make sure you review these changes at the BOE website, www.mi.gov/BOE. Information concerning FSA can be found at www.mi.gov/FSA.

Hackley Library Members Ratify New Contract

By Christine Stressman, Senior Labor Relations Specialist



Hackley Library employees are celebrating the ratification of their three (3) year Collective Bargaining Agreement with gains in wages, holidays, longevity, and language improvements. If you're ever in Muskegon and wish to visit a beautiful historical building, this group of dedicated employees welcome you to come visit and would be more than happy to give you a tour of the historical buildings that makeup the downtown Hackley Library complex.

The Historic Library

In 1888, the Muskegon Board of Education provided for the construction of a public library and reading room. The granite structure would serve as a symbol of Muskegon's strength and optimism at the end of the 19th century. The library opened on October 16, 1890. The original collection held 14,750 books, 12,000 of them new and the rest moved from the public school library.

The building was designed in the American Romanesque style of architecture. Features include a tall octagonal turret, a welcoming lobby of oak doors, and fine marble with multicolor mosaics. The main entrances is a monumental arch which invites visitors to enter.

Federal Rental Assistance is Available

An Article from SEIU International

Millions of renters are struggling to make monthly payments, face rental debt or are in jeopardy of losing housing during the COVID-19 pandemic. As eviction moratoriums are being lifted across the country, state and local programs are taking applications from renters to distribute money from the Treasury Department's Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA) program in their own communities. ERA programs were created to help renters cover their housing-related costs and remain housed during the pandemic. These programs have distributed more than 1.4 million payments to households, totaling more than \$7.7 billion to support the housing stability of vulnerable renters.

The rental aid is distributed through your state and local governments. ERA programs work in different ways, depending on how each state or local government establishes its program. Apply today!

Frequently Asked Questions

Am I eligible for emergency rental assistance?

To be eligible for help covering your rent, you must have an agreement to pay rent for your home or mobile home lot. You don't necessarily need to have a signed lease, and your home could be an apartment, house, mobile home, or other place.

These three statements also need to be true:

1. At least one member of your household has:
 - Qualified for unemployment or should qualify
 - Lost income
 - Owed large expenses, OR
 - Had other financial hardships
2. Your household income is below a certain amount, based on where you live
3. At least one member of your household is experiencing housing instability, which means they are at risk of becoming homeless or would have trouble finding a stable place to live

For details, see the [Michigan Emergency Rental Assistance Portal](#).

What does emergency rental assistance cover?

The federal ERA program allows local programs to cover rent, utilities, and home energy costs. This includes electricity, gas, fuel oil, water and sewer, and trash removal. If your landlord normally pays for utilities or home energy costs, these are counted as part of your rent.

Rental assistance may also cover:

- Reasonable late fees (if not included in your rental or utility debt)
- Internet service to your home
- Moving expenses and other rental-related fees (such as security deposits, application fees, or screening fees) for families who have to move
- Hotel or motel bills (if you had to move out of your home and you don't have a permanent home elsewhere)

How much financial help can I get?

The federal ERA Program allows local programs to receive up to 18 months of help with rent, including overdue rent, back to March 13, 2020, if the money is available.

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If you have overdue rent, the money must go toward rent that you owe, first. Local programs may be able to help with future rent. In addition, you may get help with your future rent payments, up to 3 months at a time. But this depends on your local program.

How do I apply for emergency rental assistance?

You apply through your state or local emergency rental assistance program. Each program has some flexibility in how they set up policies and procedures to suit the needs of their local community. For example, in some areas, you can apply for rental assistance yourself. In other areas, landlords need to submit an application first. Visit cfpb.gov/govrent to find programs in your area. It's preferred that applicants apply through their localities before applying to the statewide program. If you cannot find any program in your area, call 2-1-1 or your local housing authority for assistance.

How can I show that I am eligible?

Eligibility is based on a renter household's financial situation and housing needs.

When you apply for emergency rental help, you will be asked to show that your income is eligible and that you're experiencing housing instability

Local programs have different requirements. They may ask you for a written statement or they can ask you to show your income with other documents (for example, unemployment benefits documents, pay stubs, tax documents, a statement from an employer, etc.). Local programs can rely on an applicant's written self-attestation without further documentation. You can find examples of [self-attestation forms here](#).

When should I apply?

Apply for emergency rental assistance as soon as possible because it may take time to get that money to you.

Emergency rental assistance programs must prohibit the eviction of renters for nonpayment in months for which they receive emergency rental assistance. Landlords who accept direct payments of future rent are not allowed to evict you for not paying rent during the period covered by the rental assistance. When programs make direct payments to landlords to cover back rent, federal guidance strongly encourages them to prohibit eviction for 30 to 90 days after the period covered by rental assistance.

How long will it take to receive emergency rental assistance?

Once you've applied for rental assistance, it can take weeks or months for your application to be processed. Housing advocates advise tenants to be patient but to check in periodically, as they might find out they're missing a document or need something else to move the application along.

Resources:

[Treasury Department's FAQs](#)

[Emergency Rental Assistance Fact Sheet \(May, 2021\)](#)

[Emergency Rental Assistance Fact Sheet \(June, 2021\)](#)

[Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's Questions and Answers](#)

[State Emergency Rental Assistance Portals: Michigan](#)

(You will find a complete list of state and local programs available here: cfpb.gov/govrent)

Healthcare Marketplace Open Enrollment Begins Today with New Plan Options

A November 1, 2021 press release from Governor Gretchen Whitmer

Gov. Whitmer today announced Michiganders have more plans to choose from, more low- or no-cost coverage options, and more time to enroll during the Health Insurance Marketplace Open Enrollment period, which runs today, November 1 through January 15, 2022.

More Health Plans

During Open Enrollment, Michigan consumers are able to choose from 174 approved health plans from 10 insurers on the Health Insurance Marketplace, which is available at HealthCare.gov or by calling 800-318-2596. In addition, an increased number of off-Marketplace plans are also available, bringing the total number of individual plans available to Michiganders to 256.

Overall, DIFS has [approved average rate changes](#) for individual plans that range from a decrease of 1.8% to an increase of 8.8%. Overall, the average rate increase on the individual market is 4.7%, well below the 6% average annual increase in health care costs seen during the last two years. Michigan continues to have a robust marketplace and comparatively lower average premium rates than most other states, tying for the 3rd lowest benchmark premiums in a [2021 Kaiser Family Foundation study](#).

More Low- or No-Cost Coverage Options

Increased subsidies established by the American Rescue Plan to give more Michiganders the opportunity to qualify for low- or no-cost coverage will continue in 2022. In 2021, Michigan consumers saw an average premium reduction of 45% through these subsidies, or more than \$71 per month in savings. Statewide, Michiganders saw nearly \$12 million in savings per month, and nationally, more than half of consumers found coverage for \$10 or less per month.

Premium tax credits depend on estimated household income, and consumers will see the monthly savings they qualify for when they apply for Marketplace coverage. Before applying, Michiganders can visit HealthCare.gov/Lower-Costs to estimate whether they may qualify for subsidies and other savings.

More Time, Assistance for Enrollment

The 2022 Open Enrollment period was extended so that consumers have until January 15, 2022 to enroll. However, consumers generally need to choose a plan by December 15 for their coverage to start January 1, 2022.

In addition, \$3.3 million in grants have been awarded to three Michigan organizations to expand access to qualified Navigators who provide free assistance to consumers who need help signing up for health coverage. For assistance, visit LocalHelp.HealthCare.gov or call 800-318-2596.

To review available plans and rates, visit HealthCare.gov today. For questions about health coverage, visit the Michigan.gov/HealthInsurance or call DIFS 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday at 877-999-6442.

The mission of the Michigan Department of Insurance and Financial Services is to ensure access to safe and secure insurance and financial services fundamental for the opportunity, security, and success of Michigan residents, while fostering economic growth and sustainability in both industries. In addition, the Department provides consumer protection, outreach, and financial literacy and education services to Michigan residents. For more information, visit Michigan.gov/DIFS.