



SEIU 517M
PUBLIC EMPLOYEES

The E-Former

The Official Electronic Newsletter of
SEIU Local 517M

October 2022

Staff Directory

Please contact the appropriate staff person using their phone or email (click their name) below:

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[Andy Johnson](#) - 269.978.1994

Region 3:

[Dominic Barbato](#) - 313.314.6511

Click on the map to find out which Region your unit is in.



State Employee Reauthorization Extends into Next Week!

If you haven't done so already, you can still reauthorize your union dues deduction without a break in membership. Since the computer portal is down today through Wednesday, you can call the HRMN Self-Service Hotline at 877-766-6447.

The hotline is open between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. State employees can use their employee identification number or social security number and be connected with a live Michigan HR specialist. Once on the phone, tell the representative you wish to Authorize Union Dues Deductions and that reauthorization will activate on Thursday when the system is back online.

Members who allow their membership to expire will lose all the benefits of membership on October 14th. This includes voting rights, and the great member-only benefits you receive as a SEIU Local 517M member such as discount tickets for entertainment, plans for insurance, loans, legal services, travel and more!

New Saginaw Office

We are excited to announce that SEIU Local 517M has officially relocated its Saginaw offices to the Central Michigan University Research Corporation (CMURC) located on the 2nd floor of the SVRC Marketplace in downtown Saginaw.

This new location is within walking distance of multiple SEIU



represented units and will allow for increased accessibility for hundreds of members who work in the downtown area or travel from other parts of the state for Union meetings and events.

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STAND TOGETHER — STAND STRONG

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

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The decision to relocate was made to better serve the members of SEIU Local 517M, and to enhance the resources, representation, and utilization of Union services.

In addition, desperately needed repairs/upgrades to our former location were estimated to cost well beyond the value of the building and therefore any repairs or upgrades would not have served the financial/organizational/representational interests of the membership.

SEIU has two private offices within the CMURC, which is located at 203 S. Washington Ave, Ste 260, Saginaw, MI 48607 with additional access to a wide variety of amenities:



- Secure 24/7 Access
- Video Conferencing and Webcams
- High Speed Wi-Fi
- Discounts on Large Event Spaces
- Meeting Rooms
- Lounge Areas
- Free Parking
- Community Events

Members should expect no interruption in services as we acclimate to our new location, and our phone numbers and email addresses remain the same, as will our website address and social media accounts.

We look forward to utilizing this new space and working with the members to provide the best possible services in Saginaw and throughout the State of Michigan.

MDOT Technician Apprenticeship Program – State’s First Ever

By Kevin Karpinski, Senior Labor Relations Specialist

During the most recent round of contract negotiations the Technical Unit of SEIU 517M proposed a comprehensive Apprenticeship program for the purpose of recruiting and filling Transportation Technician positions. This program is the State’s first ever Apprenticeship program.

The Union is working with the Department of Transportation, under U.S. Department of Labor oversight, to complete program requirements which will create a certified Apprenticeship program to be used to fill state classified Transportation Technician positions. These jobs are responsible for inspecting Michigan’s bridges, highways, and roads.

With the influx of Federal and State funding for infrastructure projects, and the recent exodus of Technicians to higher paid private consultant jobs, the Union made this proposal appealing to MDOT’s desire to maintain and strengthen oversight and management of inspection services by state employees. Disastrous experiences with the sub-contracting of services motivated the Union to bolster State employee oversight and control of inspection work and quality assurance, including accurate billing for construction and materials.

The parties are currently meeting to set up the joint ownership of the program, determine the requirements of the plan, and to set up educational and promotional systems for outreach into educational institutions. Currently, basic requirements will be for participants to complete 144 hours in a community college classroom and to complete 2 years of on-the-job training. During this training participants will be employed as “Engineering Assistants” and supervised by current MDOT Technicians. Once the class hours and training are completed, the program graduates are eligible for hiring into permanent Transportation Technician positions statewide.

Senior MDOT Technicians, trainers, and lead workers will be essential to the success of this program. The Union team helping coordinate these efforts include Rod Jackson, John Eck, George Heath, Jason Jackson, and Paul Cristini, working with Senior Labor Relations Specialist Kevin Karpinski.

Staff Changes at Local 517M



We would like to welcome Ashley Konyha to our staff as our new Office Manager. Ashley started with us on September 12th.

Ashley brings extensive finance and human resource experience to us from both union and private sector employers. She works out of our Lansing office and can be contacted at akonyha@seiu517m.org or 517-267-2095.

Ashley replaces Olivia Jelinek who left in September. We thank Olivia for her service to the membership and wish her the best of luck in her new endeavors.

Flint Paraprofessionals Take a Stand for Higher Wages

By Dominic Barbato, Labor Relations Specialist



After years of feeling devalued and shut out of proper pay, 20 Flint Paraprofessionals went to their school board meeting on September 14th to say “enough is enough”. SEIU Local 517M members made the board take notice when they spoke about how the low wages the district pays them, make it difficult to do their jobs. “I feel like we are almost

begging”, said unit President Carmella Johnson, “we are done begging”.

Flint paraprofessionals who have worked diligently for their school district for over 20 years still do not make even \$15 per hour. “We want everyone to start at least at \$15 per hour”, said Johnson. “I stay up at night, wondering, crying, and praying that my people will be able to afford health coverage”, she added.

The district’s wages are low enough that it is difficult to keep new employees in the position, and there are many job openings. Josie Lucas, a newer paraprofessional, reminded the board members that even with her being considered a full-time school employee she still qualified for welfare. She also told the board that she doesn’t know of any other student in her class at UM-Flint that plans to work for the district.

With her fellow Paraprofessionals holding signs and accompanied by several family members, Elizabeth Peeples reiterated to the school board that she and her co-workers work side by side with teachers in the classroom and provide a vital service to the district.

Not letting the public comment timer interrupt her speech, Johnson finished by letting those in power know that 517M members are in it for the long haul. “Board members change, administrators change, but guess who stays the same?”, she said while the members assembled called back “Paraprofessionals!”.

The board voted unanimously to open the contract for wage discussions and the parties are currently in negotiations.

[View Carmella Johnson’s comments](#)

Member Appreciation Picnic

On September 11th, SEIU 517M members and their families came together for a Member Appreciation Picnic at Milliken State Park in Detroit. This day was filled with fun, food, and fellowship. Future SEIU Local 517M Member Appreciation events will be scheduled in other regions across the state. Pictures courtesy of Rod Jackson.



Picture at Right:
(L-R:) Jeremy Tripp,
Janice Cosey, Rod
Jackson, Joey Combs,
Roland Whitlow,
Sonya Robinson,
Ellina Simmons-
Gibson

Jackson to Continue as Technical Unit President



The nomination period for electing the Technical Bargaining Unit President was from August 1, 2022 to September 9, 2022. Current Technical Unit President Roderick Jackson was the only candidate to submit a nomination for this position.

Being the only candidate to submit a nomination for this office, he was declared the winner by acclamation without the need to hold an election. His new three-year term of office will begin on November 1, 2022 and will expire on October 31, 2025.

Roderick has been a Transportation Technician for 28 years and has served in many different leadership positions including Steward, Chapter Vice President, Chapter President, Unit Vice President. He also serves on the Local's COPE Committee, and the unit Grievance Committee. He was appointed Unit President in 2020.

Congratulations!

Maximize Your Union Membership, Sign-up for [SEIU Member Benefits](#) and Start Saving Today!

