



SEIU 517M
PUBLIC EMPLOYEES

The **E-Former**

The Official Electronic Newsletter of
SEIU Local 517M

February 2024

Staff Directory

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

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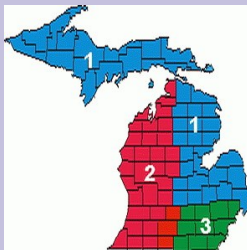
[Christine Stressman](#) - 616.696.2141

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Region 3:

[Lamont Williams](#) - 313.314.6511

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



2024 Scholarship Applications Now Available



The SEIU 517M - Tomorrow's Michigan Today Scholarship is open to dues-paying members in good standing (as defined in the SEIU Local 517M Constitution and Bylaws), their spouse, children, step children, adopted children or grandchildren with college or trade school expenses.

There are 15 scholarships available and the amount of each scholarship is \$600. These non-renewable scholarships will be awarded to students based on successful completion of the application process and meeting certain criteria. Awards will be made via a lottery system from all eligible submissions.

2024 Scholarship Applications are now available. [Click here.](#)

2023 Scholarship winners were: Blaine Barkovich, Jill Carlson, Jania Clowers, Jayanti Collins, Christian Gross, Savanna Hoin, Richard Huff, Amara Johnsons, Braden Johnston, Julia Kirkey, Sophia Lozmack, Karianne Rodeman, Danielle Seedorf, Lashawn Williams and Garrett Zuber.

Path to Debt Cancellation Possible for Some SAVE Plan Participants

The Biden Administration announced that starting February 1, 2024, debt forgiveness could start after as few as 10 years of payments for borrowers on the Saving on a Valuable Education (SAVE) Plan. Borrowers enrolled in SAVE who originally took out \$12,000 or less for college are eligible for early forgiveness and will have their debts cancelled immediately starting this month, with no action on their part.

The Education Department will start notifying borrowers February 1st on SAVE who are eligible for forgiveness that their loans are being discharged automatically with no action needed on the borrower's part. The Department will email borrowers not on SAVE who can receive forgiveness when they sign up for the plan.

More information is available on the US Department of Education website by [clicking here.](#)

STAND TOGETHER — STAND STRONG

www.seiu517m.org

Local 517M Committee Appointments—Will You Serve?

Member engagement is the engine of our UNION. The more members that are engaged, the more powerful and visible we are. Did you know your Union has several standing and special committees you can join? We are currently recruiting new members to come and join us as we get ready for 2024. All appointments will expire at the end of the President Comb’s term on December 31, 2024. All committee members are open for reappointment by the next President at that time.

The following standing committees currently have positions available:

Election/Tally Committee: Oversees the general elections of the Local and shall be responsible for nominations and the preparation, tallying and certification of general election ballots. Members who are not running for a leadership position that the Committee would count are eligible for appointment.



Ethics Committee: Works with the ethics liaison to review and maintain the SEIU Code of Ethical Practices and Conflict of Interest Policy, approved by the International Executive Board. This Committee is responsible for educating all members, officers, and staff on these codes and practices.

Member Engagement Committee: Promotes membership in the Union, “Members-Only” benefits, and initiate organizing activity for, and on behalf of, the Union.

Political/Legislative Committee: Oversees and promotes the Union’s political and legislative programs, as well as promote member involvement in the Committee on Political Education (COPE).



The following special committees currently have positions available:

New Member Orientation and Sign Up: Membership is the fuel that runs our UNION. The Committee helps individual units with member to member outreach in new hire orientations.

Community Partnership Committee: Focuses on opportunities for members to partner with community allies and others with a common goal. The committee works to build solidarity with other unions, organizations and neighbors to unite and advance our vision. As we continually find ways to increase our public visibility as advocates for quality public services, we will need community partners!

Leadership Development: Leaders are the drivers of our UNION. The Leadership Development Committee is responsible for facilitating the Leadership Academy. The Academy is comprised of various modules of 4-hour sessions, which are spread over 4 Saturdays which will be in-person and on Zoom. The participants are fellow members who apply for the Leadership Academy and are selected based on certain criteria.



Article 13, Section 3 of the SEIU Local 517M By-Laws states:

Standing Committee Members shall serve until discharged by the President, or until the conclusion of the President’s term. Special Committee Members shall serve for the term of the committee as established upon committee assignment. Any Committee Member may resign upon written notice to the President.

To be appointed to one of the above committees, you need to contact President Joey Combs at jcombs@seiu517m.org and let her know who you are, which unit you are from, your contact information, and which committee(s) you are interested in serving on.

AFRAM—A History

The African American Caucus (AFRAM) is established through SEIU International and is committed to enhancing opportunities for education, training, mentorship, leadership development and networking for SEIU members and staff of African descent. Membership is open to all races.

Early History

The first SEIU African American Leadership Conference was held in Atlanta, Ga., during Black History Month February 16-18, 1996. Over three hundred SEIU members were in attendance. The Conference featured workshops on “Leadership Development”, “Internal Organizing/Community Organizing”, “Power Through Labor/Management Partnerships”, Political Empowerment and Involvement” and others.

The Resolution that came out of this conference was submitted at the 1996 SEIU International Convention, calling for the authority to create National Caucuses in SEIU. The Resolution would create a National SEIU African-American Caucus, included the establishment of a twenty-four (24) person Constitution Draft Committee and the requirement to set a date within six (6) months to convene a Constitutional Convention. This resolution passed.

The National SEIU African American Caucus Founding Convention and Election of Officers was held March 14-16, 1997, at the Fairmont Hotel, in New Orleans, LA. Three Hundred and Forty-five SEIU members representing Twenty-nine (29) Local unions were in attendance. The Draft Constitution presented by the Constitution Draft Committee was reviewed, debated, amended, and adopted. A major change was to name the organization, The International Caucus for People of African Descent (AFRAM) SEIU.

Structure

AFRAM is in essence a federation of Regional Caucuses. There are twenty-two (22) National officers. Five (5) officers (President, Treasurer, Secretary, Retiree Board Member and Women’s Committee Board member) are elected every four (4) years at the national conference. Each Chairperson of the four (4) regions are automatic AFRAM Vice Presidents. In addition, each region elects three (3) members to serve as National AFRAM Executive Board members.

Each Region has elected officers who are elected every two (2) years at the Regional Civil & Human Rights/SEJ Conference. The structure of regional caucuses are determined by each region.

Local union chapters are formed in individual local unions. Most local chapters function in conjunction with the local union Civil & Human Rights Committee, although many function separately. Terms of office for local chapters are determined by each local chapter.

Geographic Chapters are formed in locations with multi SEIU locals. Geographic chapters give SEIU African American members the opportunity to participate across local union boundaries. In addition, in locals where there is not an AFRAM chapter, Geographic chapters give local union members the opportunity to participate.

AFRAM History at SEIU Local 517M



The following is a short time-line describing the establishment of the AFRAM Caucus at SEIU Local 517M and at the SEIU Michigan State Council level.

A Timeline History of AFRAM in Michigan from 2006-2013

- 2006 April. At the SEIU Social and Economic Justice Conference in Atlanta, discussions started about developing an AFRAM Caucus at Local 517M.
- 2007 July 11th. Local 517M Board of Directors of African-American descent met at the 517M Annual Conference in Mt. Pleasant where it was decided to form an AFRAM Caucus. The members met with the Local 517M Executive Officers to seek acceptance of an AFRAM Caucus within Local 517M.
- 2007 Fall. AFRAM National President Marchel Smiley and Vice-President John "JJ" Johnson came to Michigan and met with AFRAM members from Saginaw, Detroit and Flint. Local 517M received it's AFRAM Charter Membership at that meeting.
- 2008 June. The newly formed SEIU 517M AFRAM Caucus in Michigan was officially recognized at the SEIU International Convention.
- 2008 July. While attending a Bay Area AFRAM Caucus Leadership Conference in San Jose, delegates met with President Smiley and Western Region AFRAM leadership about developing the 517M and Michigan AFRAM Caucus.
- At the 2009 AFRAM National Conference in Washington D.C., Andy Johnson was elected as President of AFRAM Central Region.
- 2009 April. SEIU 517M Caucus receives the National Chapter of the Year award.
- 2009 Fall. The Michigan AFRAM State Caucus is established and holds its first meeting at the SEIU Local 1 office in Detroit.
- 2010 July. At the SEIU 517M Annual Conferences in Mt. Pleasant, the 517M Board of Directors voted to add to the Caucus to the SEIU 517M Constitution and Bylaws.
- 2011 July. The Michigan AFRAM State Caucus (MASC) of the SEIU Michigan State Council becomes active and sets a formalized meeting schedule.
- 2013 April. Andy Johnson is re-elected Central Region President the National AFRAM Conference in Los Angles.
- 2013 July. The 1st Annual MASC Leadership Conference is held in Lansing.

The following are the founding members of AFRAM at SEIU Local 517M:

Detroit

Yolanda Langston - City of Detroit Chapter President, AFRAM 517M Recording Secretary
Philip Patrick - State of Michigan HSS Unit President, AFRAM 517M Vice -President

Flint

Marvin Cook - Flint Schools Chapter President, AFRAM 517M Treasurer
Sandra Avery - SEIU 517M Labor Representative Region 4, AFRAM 517M Delegate
Barbara Fountain - Flint Schools Chapter Recording Secretary, AFRAM 517M Delegate
Howard Gribby- Flint Schools Chapter Chief Steward, AFRAM 517M Delegate

Grand Rapids

Jeff Love - Grand Rapids Headstart Chapter President, AFRAM 517M Delegate

Saginaw

Dwints Bowman - Saginaw Public Schools President, AFRAM 517M Delegate
William Tucker - SEIU 517M Labor Representative Region 1, AFRAM 517M Delegate
Glenda Simon - Saginaw Buena Vista Schools Chapter President, AFRAM 517M Delegate
Andy Johnson - City of Saginaw Chapter President, AFRAM 517M President