



SEIU 517M
PUBLIC EMPLOYEES

The **E-Former**

The Official Electronic Newsletter of
SEIU Local 517M

February 2025

2025 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.

2025 Scholarship Applications are now available. [Click here.](#)

2024 Scholarship winners were: Blaine Barkovich, Chase DeKorte, Cadence Glass, Casey Henderson, Amara Johnson, Joseph Johnston, Megan Kennedy, Camille Lozmack, Isla McCubbin-Green, Addysen Otremba, Joshua Walker, Taylor White, Lashawn Williams, Tamia Williams, and Landen Yocum.

Constitution and Bylaw Changes Approved by the Membership

The SEIU Local 517M membership Executive Board proposed at their December 14, 2024 meeting the following additions and changes to the SEIU Local 517M Constitution and Bylaws. The changes to Article 6, Article 15 and the addition of an Appendix D, allow for electronic meetings of boards, committees, and membership with specific instructions on the conduct of such meetings.

The SEIU Local 517M Election Tally Committee met on January 31, 2025 to count the votes. The membership has overwhelmingly approved these changes by almost 93%. The new Constitution and Bylaws are available the SEIU Local 517 website.

[View the updated Constitution and Bylaws](#)

Staff Directory

Interim Executive Director:
[Joey Combs](#) - 517.267.2068

**Information Services/
Union Member Discounts:**
[Dave Corrie](#) - 517.267.2090

Office Manager:
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[Andrea Valerio](#) - 989.797.4241

Member Strength Director:
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**State Unit Labor Relations:
Scientific and Engineering Unit:**
[Howard Gordon](#) - 517.267.2070

Human Services Support Unit:
[Janice Cosey](#) - 313.246.1137

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[Kevin Karpinski](#) - 517.267.2088

**School and Local Government Unit
Labor Relations:**

[Clint Bryant](#) - 989.797.4258

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[Lamont Williams](#) - 313.314.6511

[Brandell Tomanica](#) - 517.237.0426

STAND TOGETHER — STAND STRONG

www.seiu517m.org

New Staff Joins the Local 517M Team

SEIU Local 517M would like to introduce and welcome LaToyia Terry as our new Labor Relations Specialist. She will be working with school and local government units.



LaToyia is a dedicated Labor Relations Specialist with 17 years of experience in union organizing. Throughout her career, she has held key roles with SEIU Healthcare Michigan, SEIU Local 1, and the SEIU International Union. Driven by a passion for empowering workers, LaToyia has consistently championed efforts to help individuals find their voices and improve their everyday lives. Her tireless work has successfully organized thousands of workers into unions. With firsthand understanding of the challenges workers face, LaToyia remains committed to collaboration and advocacy, ensuring their experiences and needs are always at the forefront.

SEIU API Caucus Celebrates Lunar New Year

By Janice Cosey, HSS Unit President

This Lunar New Year, I was honored to accompany Rabia Keo who represents SEIU's Midwest Asian Pacific Islander (API) Caucus in Chicago to celebrate the *Year of the Snake!*

I learned about the rich cultural traditions, vibrant customs, and meaningful symbols that shape this special occasion. For 2025, the Lunar New Year marks the start of the Year of the Snake, a symbol of wisdom, resilience, and transformation in many Asian cultures. For our Asian Pacific Islander communities, Lunar New Year celebrations take on unique and beautiful traditions that reflect the diversity of cultures across the Pacific.

The Lunar New Year, also known as Chinese New Year, is celebrated by millions of people across Asia and around the world. The holiday is a time for families to gather, reflect, and honor their ancestors, while also welcoming in a new year full of promise. It is a time to honor our heritage, connect with loved ones, and offer gratitude for the past year's blessings.

The Chinese Zodiac is represented by an animal on a 12-year cycle with each year having its own distinct qualities and characteristics as represented by the animal sign. The Snake is said to have intelligence, intuition, and grace as its unique qualities. A symbol of transformation and rebirth, the Year of the Snake is traditionally seen as a time to shed old habits, embrace change, and pursue growth.

As we reflect on the Year of the Snake, let us all embrace the opportunity for growth, self-reflection, and transformation.

Happy Lunar New Year!



L-R: Janice Cosey and Rabia Keo

Local 517M Board of Auditors Selected

With the passage of the Constitution and Bylaw changes a three-member Board of Auditors was created to examine the financial books of the Local. These individuals will work with, and be trained by, our accounting firm. The Auditors will submit recommendations to the Local 517M Executive Officers and Executive Board.

There were only 3 eligible nominations received so according to Article 10, Section 3.C of the SEIU Local 517M Constitution and Bylaws, they are declared the winner by acclamation. The winners are:

Ernie Ahmad - Saginaw County Community Mental Health
Alexandra Huggins - Human Services Support Unit
Leticia Trevino - City of Saginaw

Congratulations!

Celebrating Black History Month: Embracing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

By Janice Cosey, HSS Unit President

As we enter February, we celebrate Black History Month, a time to reflect on and honor the significant contributions that Black individuals have made throughout history. This month provides an important opportunity to celebrate achievements, raise awareness, and further the ongoing conversation about diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in our communities and workplaces.



Black History Month originated in the United States to recognize the achievements and legacies of Black individuals that have often been overlooked in mainstream history. The pioneering efforts of historical figures such as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Harriet Tubman, and Sojourner Truth to modern-day trailblazers like Maya Angelou, Barack Obama and Muhammad Ali are widely known. However, there are many phenomenal Black individuals that have been instrumental in shaping the world in which we live, yet their legacies are not talked about, nor taught in our schools.

DEI is not a **Dirty** little acronym that one should be **Embarrassed** about representing or supporting, and it certainly was never meant to **Incite** hatred and division.

Here is what DEI represents:

1. **Diversity:** means to embrace and value the differences that make each of us unique. In workplaces and communities, diversity is not just about race, it is about recognizing and celebrating various backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives. By honoring diverse voices, we pave the way for greater creativity, innovation, and collaboration.
2. **Equity:** equity involves ensuring that everyone has access to the resources and opportunities they need to succeed. It is not a hand-out; it is a helping hand. It is imperative to create environments where all people have the tools and support needed to thrive. This means confronting systemic challenges and removing the barriers that have historically limited access to education, employment, and leadership roles for Black individuals.
3. **Inclusion:** it means making sure that everyone feels welcomed, valued, and heard. It is about creating a culture where people from all backgrounds, including Black communities, feel they belong. It means fostering a culture of respect and celebrating the richness that different experiences bring to the table.

Black History Month is not just about remembering the past, it is about creating space to reflect on how far we have come and the work that is still needed to foster a more inclusive society. Let us celebrate, learn, and continue to work towards a brighter, more inclusive future—today and every day.

Members Needed for Committee Appointments!

By Greg Merricle, SEIU 517M President

Member engagement is the engine of our Union. The more members that are engaged, the more powerful and visible we are. Every election term, the SEIU Local 517M President makes appointments to standing and special committees. These appointments last the duration of their 3-year term. We are currently recruiting committee members to come and join us as we get ready for the new term.

To be considered for appointment or to be reappointed to one of the committees listed below, please contact President Greg Merricle at president@seiu517m.org.

Committees currently available are:

Standing Committees

According to Article 13, Section 3 of the SEIU Local 517M Constitution and Bylaws as adopted December 14, 2024: 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.

Election/Tally Committee: The Election/Tally Committee shall be responsible for nominations and the preparation, tallying and certification of general election ballots.

Member Engagement Committee: The Member Engagement Committee shall promote membership in the Union, "Members-Only" benefits, and initiate organizing activity for, and on behalf of the Union.

Social and Economic Justice Committee: The Social and Economic Justice Committee is charged with the responsibility of carrying out the Social and Economic Justice programs as proposed by the Executive Board.

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

Special Committees

In accordance with Article 13, Section 1 of the SEIU Local 517M Constitution and Bylaws as adopted December 14, 2024: Special Committees may be established with committee members selected by the President and notice provided to the Executive Board. Committee members to serve with the duties as assigned and regular reports given to the Executive Board.

New Member Orientation and Sign Up. Membership is the fuel that runs our UNION. The new member orientation and sign-up committee helps units with member to member outreach in new hire orientations.

The Member Engagement Committee promotes membership in the Union. Member engagement is the engine of the Union. Member engagement has been done via member events and activities such as general membership/chapter meetings, conferences, bargaining surveys, brown bag lunch activities, ice cream socials, bingo, bowling outings, community garden events, picnics, and our Annual golf outing.

The 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!