



**SEIU 517M**  
PUBLIC EMPLOYEES

# E-FORMER

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**MARCH 2026**



## 2026 STEWARD TRAINING WRAP-UP

CLAIRE CORR, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Our Steward Training on February 21–22 at the Kellogg Center in East Lansing was nothing short of fantastic!

We dove into the legal responsibilities of union stewards with our attorney, sharpened our skills on grievance procedures with MSU, and explored the human side of leadership with the Conflict Resolution Services Center. Between engaging breakout sessions and great conversations, there was plenty of learning, and plenty of connection.

We also took time to celebrate at a lovely dinner where we honored our Stewards and Leaders of the Year. And of course, no great weekend is complete without a little fun – DJ Trivia brought out everyone’s competitive spirit!

We know the work you do isn’t easy. It takes patience, courage, and heart. Thank you to everyone who gave up their weekend to learn, grow, and support one another. Your dedication is what makes our union strong.

What a team!



## STAFF DIRECTORY

**Labor Relations (State Units)**  
**Scientific & Engineering:**  
**Howard Gordon – 517.267.2070**

**Human Services Support:**  
**Larry Sedrowski – 313.246.1137**

**Technical Unit:**  
**Kevin Karpinski – 517.267.2088**

**Labor Relations (School and Local Gov’t)**  
**Clint Bryant – 989.797.4258**

**Christine Stressman – 616.696.2141**

**Brandell Tomanica – 517.237.0426**

**Lamont Williams – 313.314.6511**

**Executive Director:**  
**Claire Corr – 517.267.2065**

**Information Services:**  
**Jacob Tkaczyk – 517.267.2090**

**Office Manager:**  
**Ashley Konyha – 517.267.2095**

**Dues and Cope Deductions:**  
**Andrea Valerio – 989.797.4241**

**Member Strength/ Member Only Benefits**  
**Marian Wilcox – 517.744.5393**

**WWW.SEIU517M.ORG**

### 2026 STEWARDS OF THE YEAR STATE OF MICHIGAN UNITS



#### **Cherese Wilkerson – Human Services Support Unit**

Cherise Wilkerson is SEIU 517M's Steward of the Year for the Human Services Support Unit. Cherise has over a decade of Steward experience and currently serves as a Chief Steward with the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity (LEO). Cherise has also served in other roles within the Union, such as on the Local Election/Tally committee.

Cherise has been an exemplary Chief Steward, consistently demonstrating a deep commitment to our members. Her ability to navigate complex grievances with professionalism and fairness has made an invaluable asset to the SEIU 517M team.

#### **Tonya Heyer – Scientific and Engineering Unit**

Tonya has been instrumental and irreplaceable to our SEIU Membership serving both as the 517M representative for her DHHS State Lab Membership and as a long-term member of our S&E Contract Bargaining Team for over 10 years since 2015.

Tonya started working for DHHS in the Tuberculosis Lab in 2008 as a TECH and, after moving up to a Microbiologist Scientist, currently serves as the Senior Microbiologist of the Mycology Lab specializing in the identification of molds & yeasts. Tonya is currently serving the health of our Mid-Michigan community, doubling up as a core Lab Scientist at Sparrow Hospital.

Tonya brings both her brilliant mind and focused dedication to her DHHS Members, while facing down the state at the bargaining table working to improve the Wages and Health Care of our 517 state employees.



#### **Jason Jackson– Technical Unit**

Jason Jackson is Vice President of the Technical Unit and is a Chief Steward. He works as a Steward in multiple departments and has handled a variety of investigations, disciplinary conferences, and filing grievances.

This last year he has had an influx of matters to handle in the Department of Corrections. He is excellent with the members, and we have received positive unsolicited feedback about his advocacy. He is well deserving of the Technical Unit Steward of the year.

***(Rod Jackson is pictured accepting the award on Jason's behalf)***

### 2026 STEWARDS OF THE YEAR

#### SCHOOL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNITS

##### Dennis Morrison – Region 1

Dennis joined SEIU eight years ago as a security employee with Saginaw Public Schools, following his retirement from Dow Corning Corporation. He chose to continue serving his community by working with students to help ensure their safety and well-being.

Dennis serves as a unit steward and a Region 1 board member. As a member of the bargaining team, he has played a key role in advancing critical initiatives, including securing employer dues deduction. He also regularly volunteers for Trunk or Treat events, as well as local and regional union activities.

Whether supporting union efforts or serving the broader community, Dennis consistently steps forward with dedication, reliability, and purpose. His commitment exemplifies the spirit of leadership and service that defines an outstanding steward.



##### Maria Deephouse – Region 2

Maria Deephouse has been a tireless and unwavering advocate for the City of Muskegon Clerical Unit for more than two decades. Throughout her years of service, she has stepped up time and again to lead: serving as Steward, President, and currently as Chief Steward.

Maria doesn't just fight for her fellow members; she lifts them up. She actively encourages others to grow into leadership, shares her knowledge generously, and empowers members to find their voice and stand strong together. Her dedication embodies the very best of our union values: solidarity, strength, and the belief that we are always stronger when we stand united.



##### Daryl Buchanan – SEIU 517M Lifetime Leadership and Service Award

Daryl Buchanan has dedicated 32 years of service to the City of Detroit and has proudly served as Union President of the Non-Supervisory Unit for the past eight years. Throughout his tenure, Mr. Buchanan's commitment to union members and his leadership have been nothing short of exceptional.

He has consistently gone above and beyond in negotiating contracts, investigating grievances, signing up new union members, educating coworkers on the importance and benefits of a strong union, and organizing union meetings to actively engage the membership. Mr. Buchanan has never hesitated to stand firm, holding management accountable and enforcing contracts, while protecting the rights and privileges that every union member is entitled to.

SEIU 517M sincerely appreciates Mr. Buchanan's outstanding leadership, unwavering dedication, and steadfast loyalty to the union and its members.

*(Lamont Williams is pictured accepting the award on Daryl's behalf)*



### REMINDER: 2026 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, stepchildren, 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.



2026 Scholarship Applications are now available. [Click here.](#)

### REMINDER: SEIU LOCAL 517M HAS NEW SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS!

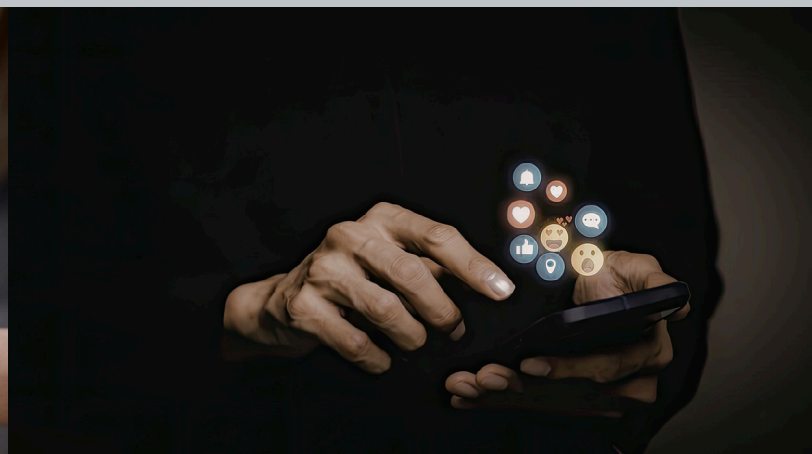
This is an announcement that SEIU Local 517M is back on social media! In this ever-changing online age, we want to stay at the forefront of sharing information that our members need to know. Below are our social media accounts, where we will be sharing updates regarding member benefits, highlight events for members, as well as other relevant information.

**X (formerly Twitter):** Please follow us [@SEIU517M](#) on X/Twitter!

**Instagram:** Please follow us [@officialseiulocal517m](#) on Instagram!

**Tik Tok:** SEIU Local 517M has joined Tik Tok! Please follow us at [@seiulocal517m!](#)

**Bluesky:** SEIU Local 517M has joined Bluesky! Please follow us at [@sei517m.bsky.social!](#)



## LETTERS FROM THE MEMBERS

“Letters from the Members” is a column in our newsletter where our members can submit articles that they would like to share with our members. If you would like to submit an article to be included in our “Letters from the Members” please email your article to [jtkaczyk@seiu517m.org](mailto:jtkaczyk@seiu517m.org).

On January 24, Alex Pretti was killed by federal Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in Minneapolis, MN. The federal government was quick to lie about Alex’s motives, and brandished him a domestic terrorist, even though video evidence showed Alex to have brandished not a gun, but a cell phone in interactions with the officers. Alex had been a nurse at the VA and a member of AFGE, local 3669. He was shot ten times in the back. None of the federal agents involved in his murder have been charged with a crime.

We lack not for statements. Disparate labor groups throughout Minnesota and the country quickly decried the government’s actions with public condemnations, from AFSCME to AFGE to the UAW. It would be far better, and in line with our core values of solidarity and justice, to act.

In this, we would not be alone. The largest union of professional nurses, National Nurses United, held a week of candlelight vigils and political advocacy after a ‘call to action’ in the wake of Pretti’s death. AFGE held a ‘Day of Remembrance’ in unity with those who grieve. A groundswell of anger in Minnesota resulted in the city’s General Strike on January 23, the first in America in 80 years, in which 40% of the city and many of its local business stayed off the job to protest the continued dragnet of immigration enforcers that has killed Alex Pretti, Renee Good, and dozens in detention facilities. The general strike garnered support from Minneapolis’ local labor leaders, and as the days pass, the seeds of that anger continue to blossom into nationwide protests and myriad economic boycotts.

Organized labor in America is no stranger to bearing witness to state violence. Ludlow. Toledo. Blair Mountain. Our history reminds us that the apparatus of law enforcement is often employed as a cudgel against mass protest for better conditions, be they the conditions of our coworker or our neighbor. We can’t collectively have safe, equitable working environments if our government can kill us without reprisal while we exercise our rights to free speech, free assembly, and the bearing of arms.

Since the situation remains unresolved, the moment demands additional courage. To put pressure on the federal administration, our local, SEIU 517M, should take a page from our fellows in the AAPI caucus spotlighted in the February newsletter and stand in broad public solidarity with Alex Pretti and demand an end to ICE abuses.

It would be prudent to also consider that the cancer within Minneapolis: of people dragged out of broken car windows and thrown into unmarked vans by masked men with guns, the arrests of small children, and the deaths of protestors, may yet metastasize in Michigan. We would be mindful to establish a collective response now, before we are forced to.

**Peter Haderlein**, Environmental Quality Analyst