



SEIU 517M
PUBLIC EMPLOYEES

E-FORMER

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MAY 2026



LAST CALL: 517M SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS DUE BY MAY 29, 2026 BY 4:00 PM

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.](#)

NOTE** Applications will not be accepted after they close on May 29th, 2026.



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CELEBRATING THE DEDICATION OF LABORATORY PROFESSIONALS DURING LABORATORY PROFESSIONALS' WEEK

BY: **MARIAN WILCOX, MEMBER STRENGTH DIRECTOR**



SEIU 517M proudly returned for the second year to recognize and celebrate Medical Laboratory Professionals during Laboratory Professionals Week on April 23, 2026.

Laboratory Professionals Week, first established in 1975, was created to raise awareness and appreciation for the vital role laboratory professionals play in patient diagnosis, treatment, and overall healthcare outcomes. Laboratory professionals are essential to the healthcare system, working behind the scenes every day to ensure accurate testing, timely results, and quality patient care.

This week of celebration provides an opportunity not only to highlight the critical contributions of laboratory professionals, but also to remind them just how valued and impactful their work truly is – while enjoying moments of connection, recognition, and fun with colleagues.

As part of the celebration, SEIU 517M sponsored lunch and delivered an engaging union presentation focused on issues most important to our members, including workplace concerns, professional recognition, and ongoing union initiatives. The event concluded with a fun and uplifting “I AM / YOU ARE AMAZING” activity dedicated to recognizing the incredible work and dedication of laboratory professionals.

Below are just a few examples of the appreciation shared among colleagues:

- “Rob is an amazing steward. As a manager, it’s great to know staff have a support system outside of management. He is visible, available, passionate, and knowledgeable. Thanks, Rob!”
- “I think Becca is amazing because she is an extremely hard worker and always has a positive attitude.”
- “Fun Committee... thank you for Lab Week!”
- “I am amazing because I help save the lives of Michigan newborn babies every day.”
- “Krystyna Weiss-Pawlak is amazing because she helped bring new testing on board. We worked late every day – weekends, days off, and beyond – to make it happen.”
- “I am amazing because I take laboratory safety very seriously.”
- “My co-worker Trung is amazing because he always maintains a positive attitude, even when doing tasks, he may not enjoy.”
- “My fellow virologists are amazing for coming together during challenging times.”
- “Phil Blankenship always saves our team – he is the GOAT!”

SEIU 517M is honored to stand alongside our laboratory professionals and celebrate the dedication, expertise, and teamwork that make such a profound difference in the lives of patients and communities across Michigan.

SEIU 517M EASTER EGG HUNT: THANK YOU VOLUNTEERS

BY: YOLANDA JOHNSON, UNIT PRESIDENT – CITY OF BATTLE CREEK

Thank you to all the volunteers who generously gave their time to make this year’s Easter Egg Hunt a wonderful success. With cooperative weather on our side, the event came together smoothly, and although the hunt moved quickly, the joy and excitement on the children’s faces made it truly memorable.

A special thank you to Tina Dawes for ensuring our Battle Creek firefighters were on site. The children loved the candy—and the chance to explore the fire truck made the experience even more special.

We were also thrilled to offer photos with our Easter Bunny, Avery Whitcomb, who did an outstanding job. Avery and Louis Whitcomb, longtime supporters of this event, stepped up once again to help bring smiles to local children—our future leaders in action!

Please join us in congratulating Penny Hepler and Lynette Winstone, whose teamwork made this one of the most organized and stress free Easter Egg Hunts to date. We also recognize the DPW supervisors who volunteered their time—your continued support does not go unnoticed.

With more volunteers than ever before, every contribution helped create a fun filled, meaningful event for our community. Thank you for your dedication and service. We look forward to more great events ahead—stay tuned!



WHAT IS COPE?

BY: RITA LAMOREAUX, DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS

As your union, we work to ensure that your worker rights are maintained and fought for. One of the ways we do this is through SEIU COPE the non-partisan political action arm of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), funded by member contributions. It is our Union's non-partisan Political Action Committee used for political and legislative activities.

SEIU COPE (Committee on Political Education) is voluntary financial support from members to elect pro-worker candidates, lobby for better wages, healthcare, and public services, and holds officials accountable. Building a strong COPE fund is essential to holding politicians accountable at every level of government.

COPE also helps our union build the political power we need to bargain strong contracts, win better benefits, and pass laws to protect our jobs and communities.

What is COPE?

The Committee on Political Education (COPE) is made up of SEIU 517M members who contribute monthly to ensure that our union has the necessary political power to protect our hard-earned victories at the bargaining table and in the legislature.

Contributions are 100% voluntary and are used to advance a bi-partisan political and legislative agenda and to support candidates who embody our values and principles.

Why Does COPE Matter?

Regardless of political affiliation, many of the decisions that impact our work, our lives and our communities are decided by elected officials. From bargaining rights, to job security and working conditions, SEIU 517M takes an active role electing candidates to school boards, city councils, county commissions, Governor, State Legislature, President, and Congress, who value and are willing to stand up for working family issues.

How are COPE Funds Used?

Through our member-driven endorsement process, COPE is used to support pro-worker candidates for local, state and federal offices.

Like our membership, we support candidates on both sides of the aisle and base our support on policy positions, actions and a commitment to protect and expand access to union membership for all workers. Building—and maintaining—our political strength begins with you. If every SEIU 517M member contributes \$5 or \$10 per pay period to COPE, together as a union, we will have the money to support our vision of a better Michigan.

[Donate Today!](#)



STRENGTH AND SOLIDARITY AT THE TABLE PRODUCES BIG WINS FOR WORKERS

BY: CLINT BRYANT, SENIOR LABOR REPRESENTATIVE

Through determination, solidarity and strength, the Thomas Township bargaining unit (representing Clerical, Code Enforcement, and DPW members) has successfully ratified a strong new four-year agreement. This victory didn't come easy. It was the result of tough negotiations, steady persistence, and a membership that stayed engaged and stood together every step of the way.

In a powerful show of labor peace, both the membership and the Township Board unanimously approved the agreement. The unit also increased their membership 32% over the course of contract negotiations.

This new contract delivers real, tangible gains that will make a difference in members' lives.

Among the highlights:

- Paid parental leave provisions that support working families when it matters most
- A significant base wage increases for all members (17%-25% base wage increases and adjustment for DPW members).
- Improved bereavement and time-off provisions.

When members stay engaged, support one another, and remain committed through the challenging moments of bargaining, the outcome is real progress: better wages, better benefits, and stronger protections.



NEW LABOR REPRESENTATIVES HIRED AT SEIU 517M!

SEIU 517M is pleased to announce that two new Labor Relation Specialists are joining the the team to bolster support to our incredible membership!

Joining us are Austin Brown and Nick Lynch, we are excited to welcome them to the team and look forward to the hard work that they will be doing for our members!

Austin Brown brings a strong track record in the labor movement, most recently serving with MCO-SEIU Local 526M. He also previously held roles as a Union Representative, Steward, and Executive Board Member with BCTGM Local 3G (Kellogg Workers Union), and as a Labor Relations Specialist/Union Representative with UFCW Local 951. Across every role, one thing has remained consistent: he fights for members.



Austin is deeply passionate about the labor movement and committed to standing up for working people. He takes pride in building strong relationships and believes a union’s strength comes from an engaged and united membership. Throughout his career, he has worked to empower members, enforce contracts, and advocate for fair treatment in the workplace. Known as a trusted and effective advocate, Austin has built his reputation on ensuring members’ voices are not only heard, but respected.

In addition to his union work, Austin serves as President of the South-Central Michigan AFL-CIO Labor Council, continuing his dedication to leadership within the labor movement. Outside of his professional work, Austin enjoys spending time with his wife, Kelsey, and their two sons, Kasen and Jameson. He is also active in his community, serving as a member of the Pennfield Board of Education and coaching youth sports.

“I’m excited to continue fighting for members and helping build a stronger, more engaged union,” he said. “Our power comes from standing together, and I look forward to making sure every member’s voice is heard.”

Nick Lynch has spent the last 19 years in the Mid-Michigan nonprofit sector, where he filled fundraising, outreach, and relationship management roles for organizations such as Central Michigan 2-1-1, United Way of South Central Michigan, and the Michigan Coalition to End Domestic & Sexual Violence. Nick is a graduate of the AFL-CIO Organizing Institute and served for seven years as the chief steward for his OPEIU 459 bargaining unit.



Originally from Clinton Township, Nick currently lives in Bath with his wife, three kids, dog, three hermit crabs, and barn cat.

TECH NOTES – NEWS FOR TECHNICAL UNIT MEMBERS

BY: KEVIN KARPINSKI, SENIOR LABOR RELATIONS SPECIALIST

THIS SECTION OF THE NEWSLETTER IS DEDICATED TO THE ISSUES BEING FACED BY OUR STATE OF MICHIGAN TECHNICAL UNIT MEMBERS.

UNION CONTRACT LANGUAGE FOLLOWED

The Technical Unit requested to have contract rights enforced for our MDOT Technicians during previous negotiations. The language states that the employer provides foul weather and safety gear. The jackets and gear was insufficient and substandard.

It appears the message was finally heard and we have some form of relief. For some reason Technicians (Inspectors) who were deemed essential and even designated Transportation 1st Responders during the Covid crisis, are listed as a 2nd priority. We appreciate the consideration and support the department's decision to provide the gear.

From MDOT:

What's new: To better support employees working in winter conditions, MDOT recently updated its Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Policy to include the addition of two winter safety jacket options:

- A general Class 3 high-visibility winter safety jacket.
- A flame resistant (FR) winter safety jacket for positions that require FR-rated apparel.

What's next: Jackets will be distributed based on job duties and exposure to winter conditions:

- First priority: Field employees required to work in extreme or winter weather conditions (transportation maintenance workers, transportation maintenance supervisors, transportation maintenance coordinators, mechanics, big bridges, electricians, etc.).
- Second priority: Field employees who routinely work in winter conditions (construction inspection, oversight, survey, operations, etc.).

Please note: Employees whose work only occasionally or rarely takes them into the field during winter conditions will not be assigned winter safety jackets. These employees should continue using high-visibility safety vests over their personal winter coats.

What they're saying: This policy update has been in development for several months and the department is excited to offer these new options to better support employee safety and comfort in the field. By providing the right equipment for the job, MDOT continues its commitment to protecting employees while they carry out critical work across the state.