



# Legislative Priorities 2023-2025

MEA's Legislative Priorities reflect the values of MEA and how they interact with common topics of discussion in the legislative process, serving as a guide for how MEA lobbies regarding specific legislation under consideration by the Legislature.

## **Key areas of consideration for 2023-25 include:**

- Eliminate all prohibited subjects of bargaining
- Repeal Right to Work
- Pension reform including elimination of Pension Tax
- Provide adequate funding for PreK-12+ and higher education including increased compensation for educational professionals
- Provide a well-funded public educational system to attract and retain teachers and educational professionals at all levels
- Restore a high-quality defined benefit retirement plan to attract and retain all public school education professionals
- Making sure all active employees and retired members have access to high-quality, affordable health care representing full (100%) insurance coverage including premiums
- Restore payroll deduction of dues
- Increase school safety measures, which includes gun safety legislation
- Replace reading mandates and retention for K-3 grades with a comprehensive PreK-12+ program
- Provide all students with certified and properly trained teachers and substitutes
- Incorporate local associations in all educational decision making
- Support the whole student by establishing appropriate student-to-educator ratios

These priorities are revisited every other year by members elected or appointed to the MEA Legislation Commission and approved by that body and the MEA Board of Directors.

**Michigan Education Association**  
**Legislative Priorities**  
**2023-25**

As recommended by the MEA Legislation Commission on February 9, 2023.

**Commission Members:**

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As adopted by the MEA Board of Directors on April 20, 2023.

## **Legislative Priorities 2023-2025**

### **Preamble**

MEA's legislative program supports fully funded programs and initiatives to advance the following goals: safety, civility and order in every school, every student ready to learn, every school building in good condition, every classroom connected to current technologies, quality state-certified educator(s) in every classroom/program, and adequate numbers of qualified and non-instructional education support professionals and supervisory/administrative staff.

MEA supports a quality educational program in every higher education institution, delivered by a qualified full-time faculty and staff.

MEA supports legislation and preserves and protects our members' right to bargain the health care plan and carrier of their choice without restriction.

MEA supports legislation that guarantees our members the right to bargain the highest quality benefits (e.g., including, but not limited to, medical, long-term disability, hearing, dental, vision, life, and retirement).

MEA supports legislation that ensures that every public-school student in Michigan is held to and given the opportunity to meet the highest possible standards of achievement.

MEA supports legislation that guarantees and expands our members' ability to bargain their working conditions without restrictions.

### **Introduction**

The Michigan Education Association Legislative Program is presented in the form of three core initiatives for Michigan public education students and MEA members: Quality Education Agenda, Funding, and Professional Conditions. These initiatives are followed by the clear delineation of the legislative objectives of the organization as stated in MEA's Legislative Issues" and "MEA's Continuing Legislative Concerns." The MEA engages in a campaign to ensure that the groundwork is laid to bring these items to fruition.

## **MEA Core Legislative Initiatives**

### **I. Quality Education Agenda**

MEA supports a Quality Public Schools Agenda to help strengthen public schools and the relationship between their communities.

MEA supports legislation to provide increased state funding for quality and equitable programs in Michigan's public PreK-12 schools, intermediate school districts, and higher education institutions that addresses the total social, emotional, economic, and educational needs of all students. Mandated programs shall be fully funded by local, state, and federal governments.

### **II. Professional Conditions**

MEA supports legislation that eliminates all prohibited subjects of bargaining in order to provide our members with the highest quality working conditions.

Such conditions shall provide a safe and secure professional work environment that includes, but is not limited to: the right to bargain collectively over wages, benefits, hours, terms, and conditions of employment; healthy and safe working environments; just cause, and due process; participation in educational decision-making; evaluation; professional development; access to modern technologies and appropriate training; and securely funded retirement pensions and benefits for all who have served our students.

## **MEA Legislative Issues**

MEA's Legislative Issues require MEA, singly or through coalitions, to advance MEA's objectives. They comprise issues currently before the Legislature, or likely to be so in the future. MEA serves as a prime mover to initiate and advance its legislative agenda and to oppose those items detrimental to its members, public education, and students.

### **Quality Education Agenda**

MEA supports legislation:

- A) That addresses the total social, emotional, economic, and educational needs of all public PreK-12 through higher education students in the State of Michigan.
- B) To ensure that all schools which are receiving public funds are adhering to the same local, state, and federal mandates and reporting guidelines.
- C) That provides for all schools receiving state funds to be staffed by certified professional personnel who are accessible to all students.

- D) To enhance student success at two-year and four-year higher education institutions by significantly reversing the trend toward the use of adjunct and/or part-time faculty and increase the employment of full-time tenured/continuing contract faculty.
- E) To recognize the importance and benefits of shared governance on our higher education campuses.
- F) That clearly establishes the purpose of all state mandated testing programs be used for student assessment and growth rather than teacher or school evaluations. Without priority or limitation, these tests will be:
  - 1) Age and developmentally appropriate.
  - 2) Culturally unbiased.
  - 3) Linguistically appropriate.
  - 4) Used only for student assessment and/or student evaluation.
  - 5) Relevant, equitable, and data based.
  - 6) Given in optimal and consistent testing conditions including dates and times.
  - 7) Reflective of the current school year.
  - 8) Designed to provide immediate feedback.
  - 9) Used non-punitively.
  - 10) Provide for socio-economic equitable conditions (i.e., calculators, headphones, air conditioning, etc.)
  - 11) Designed to allow for accommodations.
  - 12) Designed to remove appropriate data (i.e., students with chronic absences, test anxiety, parental opt-outs, exclusion of randomly selected test items or the obvious inadequate test taking time such as returning a test 15 minutes, etc.)
  - 13) Used sparingly to allow for classroom time to be maximized.
  - 14) Administered in a safe environment for both staff and students.
  - 15) Eliminated during a public health crisis.
- G) That ensure safe, secure healthy schools and campuses, which includes reasonable gun safety legislation.
- H) To support schools and campuses as weapon-free zones, except for required curriculum or police officers and school security personnel.
- I) That requires school districts to adopt appropriate anti-bullying policies that include enumerated categories such as, but not limited to, age, gender, national origin, race, ethnic background, religious beliefs and sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.
- J) To create an enforceable process for reducing school truancy.
- K) To amend state legislation to establish a student to teacher class size ratio that shall not exceed 24 to 1 for all secondary general education and 21 to 1 for all primary levels and a proportionately lower number in programs for students with special needs.

- L) To assure that all students and educational professionals, including persons with disabilities and medically fragile students, receive safe and proper care to meet their needs by certified/professional school nurses.
- M) To support the whole child, develop a policy to decrease student-to-teacher ratio for school counselors, psychologists, behavior interventionists, and all other ancillary services.
- N) To increase funding for public early childhood education (pre-school) programs staffed by fully certified teachers.
- O) To require public early childhood and PreK-12+ through higher education institutions to support state and MEA programs of educational excellence with adequate numbers of curriculum specialists, instructional education support professionals, non-instructional education support professionals, ancillary staff, and administrative staff.
- P) To secure the popular election of intermediate school district board members.
- Q) To support the statewide election and college and university boards/trustees and the State Board of Education.
- R) That ensures the school calendar is a matter of local control and subject to collective bargaining.
- S) To respect the integrity of local control for local school districts.
- T) To promote cooperation between 2-year and 4-year higher education institutions in relation to the Michigan Transfer Agreement (MTA) legislation.
- U) To return the right and responsibility of local school districts to inform their constituents regarding millage, bonding, and ballot issues that affect students.

***Continuing Concerns:*** These issues represent ideas to which MEA is committed but which may not currently be the subject of legislative activity/action.

MEA supports legislation:

- A) That preserves and strengthens academic freedom in curricula and instruction.
- B) That will enhance the nutritional value of the school breakfast and lunch program for all students in public school education.
- C) That assures access to higher education for all students.
- D) That assures access to Career Technology Education (CTE) programing for all students.

- E) That replaces/modifies the third grade reading law (PA 306 of 2016) with legislation that has input and support from all stakeholders, eliminates student retention, and develops a comprehensive PreK-12+ reading program.
- F) That supports the preservation, strengthening, and expansion of the current civil and human rights laws.
- G) That maintains Equal Opportunity (Title IX) for the State of Michigan.
- H) To provide affirmative action legislation to improve racial and gender-equitable balance in educational institutions.
- I) That provides every public-school student a multicultural, gender-equitable program consisting of a high-quality core curriculum including, but not limited to, elective programs such as:
  - 1) Career/Vocational/Agriculture/Technical Education
  - 2) Citizenship/Community Services/Social Emotional Learning
  - 3) Co-Curricular Educational Opportunities
  - 4) Computer Literacy/Technology
  - 5) Environmental Education
  - 6) World Languages
  - 7) Health Education
  - 8) Library Media Skills
  - 9) Music Education
  - 10) Physical Education
  - 11) Visual/Performing Arts
- J) That establishes and preserves Ethnic/Minority Education, Global/Multicultural Education, Bi-Lingual/Bi-Cultural Education and Diversity Education.
- K) For the preservation and improvement of bilingual education, migrant education, gifted and talented education, special education, and “at-risk” programs.
- L) To preserve the requirement to report subgroup data (female/male/gender expansive, majority/minority, advantaged/disadvantaged) by the 1996 Revised School Code so that areas of needed improvement can be identified.
- M) Requiring each Michigan public school board to:
  - 1) Implement PA 185 of 1987 regarding AIDS and other STI education.
  - 2) Adopt a policy on the teaching of reproductive health and support a collaborative effort with the community to establish and maintain program(s) that foster informed and responsible sexual decisions by students.
  - 3) Adopt a policy for teaching hygiene and public health awareness (i.e., pandemic preparedness).

- 4) Adopt a policy to inform about substance use and abuse.
- 5) Indemnify reproductive health teachers from frivolous lawsuits based on their expression of course content.

N) To provide a federal equal rights amendment to the United States Constitution.

## **Funding**

MEA supports legislation:

- A) That would hold harmless ISDs (intermediate school districts) and community colleges from Downtown Development Authorities, Tax Increment Financing Authorities (TIFAs) and other tax abatement, credits or tax eliminations that contribute to the structural deficit for funding public schools. Hold harmless payments will be out of general fund money.
- B) That would require sunset dates for all tax abatements, credits and waivers.
- C) That would restore the funding lost from the school aid fund by the transfer of educational programs that were paid from the general fund programs.
- D) Making sure all active employees and retired members have access to high quality affordable health care representing full (100%) health insurance coverage including premiums.
- E) To increase state funding for quality and equitable programs in each of Michigan's early childhood, PreK-12+, and ISDs. Such funding shall include, without priority, and not be limited to:
  - 1) Adult Education
  - 2) Alternative Education
  - 3) At-risk
  - 4) Career and Tech Education
  - 5) Fine and Performing Arts
  - 6) Fitness
  - 7) Gifted and Talented
  - 8) ISD Operations
  - 9) Nutrition
  - 10) Physical Education
  - 11) Preschool
  - 12) Reading Initiative
  - 13) Safe and Secure Schools
  - 14) School Modernization and Infrastructure
  - 15) Small Class Size Initiative
  - 16) Special Education
  - 17) Technology
  - 18) Transportation (criteria should include geographic factors)



- 19) Before-School and After-School Child Care Programs
- 20) District Safety
- 21) Health and Wellness (social, emotional, and physical well-being)
- 22) Local and National Health Crisis

- F) To provide increased state funding for professional development of public-school employees for all certification/licensure.
- G) To ensure that every school library be staffed with a certified media specialist/librarian and include funding for this position.
- H) To increase state funding for equity payments to address funding differentials among public PreK-12+ and intermediate school districts, while enhancing funding levels for all.
- I) To enhance the school aid fund to support an increase in compensation for retaining and attracting education professionals.
- J) To provide additional resources for students “at risk.”
- K) To provide additional resources for Multi-Language Learners (MLL) which includes English language learners (ELL), English as a second language (ESL), Emergent Bi-Linguals, and Heritage Language Learners (HLL), whether mainstreamed or in self-contained classrooms or programs.
- L) To assure the state meets its full and true obligation for the funding of all special educational programs.
- M) Increase funding levels for community colleges and address the changes that have occurred since the original funding was established in 1984. Improve the funding mechanism to address the changes in enrollment, demographics, and other non-state revenue sources.
- N) That provide the state funding increases needed to assure quality academic, vocational, and technical offerings at each of Michigan’s public colleges and universities.
- O) That prohibits the appropriation of public funds directly or indirectly to nonpublic early childhood and PreK-12+ through higher education schools.

***Continuing Concerns:*** These issues represent ideas to which MEA is committed but which may not currently be the subject of legislative activity/action.

MEA supports legislation:

- A) That provides funding programs in higher education based on student need and enrollment.

- B) To help defray the costs of post-secondary education through funding innovations to students.
- C) To provide funding for scholarships, grants, and enrichment programs for all students (i.e., ethnic and racial minorities, women, and non-traditional students in higher education).
- D) To provide state funding, including differential tuition, to allow community college out-of-district students to enroll in programs not offered in their college home districts.
- E) To restore funding to the Michigan Department of Education for the purpose of oversight and implementation of all state and federal education regulations.
- F) To provide funding for health and safety measures in schools and campuses (i.e., personal protective equipment (PPE), safety equipment, water/air quality).
- G) To provide funding for school and campus safety initiatives including gun violence.
- H) To implement and emergency health and medical leave policy (i.e., isolation, quarantine, and paid leave).

### **Professional Conditions**

MEA supports legislation:

- A) To restore payroll deduction of dues (Public Act 53 of 2012).
- B) To repeal or oppose any constitutional amendment that limits the rights of members on the basis of age, gender, national origin, race, ethnic background, religious beliefs, citizenship, sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression and their ability to secure benefits including, but not limited to, health insurance and retirement.
- C) To prohibit discrimination based on race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, color, weight, height, national origin, citizenship, age, marital status, disability, veteran status as provided for and to the extent required by state and federal statute in public educational institutions or those institutions providing supplemental services and employment practices.
- D) That would require the State of Michigan to provide low interest loans and/or flexible repayment plans to probationary and substitute educators for completing the required credits for a professional certificate.
- E) That allows income tax credits for payment of student loans and to establish a fund to provide partial or full payment of the balance of student loans for educators to commit to the profession.

- F) To restore and strengthen the collective bargaining rights of MEA members, including, but not limited to:
- 1) The right to negotiate over the potential of job loss or change in employer.
  - 2) Elimination of unilateral “declarations of impasse.”
  - 3) Compulsory binding arbitration (like PA 312 of 1969) as a contract dispute resolution procedure (interest arbitration).
  - 4) Educator discipline.
  - 5) Just cause standard.
  - 6) Layoff and recall.
  - 7) The placement and evaluation process.
  - 8) Who is or will be the policyholder of any employee group insurance benefit.
  - 9) Establishment of the starting day for the school year and of the amount of pupil contact time required to receive full state school aid.
  - 10) The composition of school improvement committees.
  - 11) The decision of whether to provide or allow interdistrict or intradistrict open enrollment opportunity in a school district or the selection of grade levels or schools in which to allow an open enrollment opportunity.
  - 12) The decision of whether to act as an authorizing body to grant a contract to organize and operate one or more public schools.
  - 13) The decision of whether to contract with a third party for one or more non-instructional support services; or the procedures for obtaining the contract for non-instructional support services other than bidding described in this subdivision; or the identity of the third party; or the impact of the contract for non-instructional support services on individual employees or the bargaining unit.
  - 14) The use of volunteers in providing services at its schools.
  - 15) Decisions concerning use and staffing of experimental or pilot programs and decisions concerning use of technology, or the impact of those decisions on individual employees or the bargaining unit.
  - 16) Any compensation of additional work assignment to the employee.
  - 17) Decisions about the development, content, standards, procedures, adoption and implementation of the method of compensation decisions.
  - 18) The right to bargain subcontracting, privatization, consolidation of programs and/or districts.
  - 19) Establish due process for all educators that do not invoke the Tenure Act.
- G) Preserving the contractual right to bargain release time for union work.
- H) To preserve and strengthen state actuarial funding levels for the Michigan Public School Employees Retirement System (MPERS) as well as legislation to eliminate the amount that a public-school retiree contributes toward their health, dental, vision and hearing insurance premium.

- I) To increase employer contributions in community college and higher education retirement programs for members not covered by MPSERS. Increase employer contribution in community colleges and higher education retirement programs equal to the MPSERS contributions.
- J) To allow ALL members who desire, to return to or select the defined benefit plan in MPSERS.
- K) To restore, maintain and/or improve the quality of the current retirement program by the following and other improvements:
  - 1) To restore the right of all current and future members employed by Michigan community colleges and higher education institutions to have MPSERS as their primary retirement plan.
  - 2) To increase the annual pension provided for public school retirees, including, but not limited to, compounding the annual increase for MIP participants.
  - 3) To set a minimum pension for retirees who have retired prior to 1987 that reflects the impact of inflation and a living wage.
  - 4) To eliminate the intervening employment disqualification for maternity/child rearing retirement service credit.
  - 5) To adjust the MPSERS hybrid pension plan (Pension Plus 2) in the following ways:
    - a) To set a clear and unambiguous retirement eligibility age that is not tied to a funding formula or member life expectancy.
    - b) To provide a static employee contribution rate percentage rather than one that is tied to future unfunded accrued actuarial liabilities that may or may not occur in the future.
    - c) To allow members who have already chosen between the DC and Pension Plus 2 plans to alter their choice retroactively with any change to either plan.
    - d) To change the 75-day irrevocable choice window default to Pension Plus 2.
  - 6) To ensure a defined benefit plan similar to the Member Investment Plan (MIP) and eliminate all MPSERS defined contribution and hybrid plan structures.
  - 7) To require all newly-hired public school employees (including charter school employees) to participate in the MPSERS.
  - 8) To increase the 75-day decision window to a 120-day window for new employees to select their pension plan choice or after the member has earned his/her first \$10,000 of MPSERS reportable income, whichever is later.
  - 9) To eliminate the taxation of all pension programs.
- L) That requires teacher-training institutions, the Michigan Department of Education, educational stakeholders, and the State Board of Education to develop high standards and accreditation for alternative teacher programs.
- M) That continues to create programs for education support professionals to become a substitute or certified teacher.

- N) To implement and expand staff peer assistance/mentoring programs for all educators, including education support professionals.
- O) To provide pay equity for all full-time and part-time MEA members (i.e., early childhood and PreK-12+ through higher education).
- P) That provides just cause and includes a final and binding decision by a neutral party for all public-school employees, in all areas of due process, including teacher tenure.
- Q) Ensuring that education evaluation systems are subjects of collective bargaining including, but not limited to:
  - 1) Developing a due process and grievance procedure for teachers to object to their evaluation rating. All complaints must be registered, heard, and adjudicated at the local and state level if necessary.
  - 2) Ensuring that multiple measures and data sources are used in educator evaluations.
  - 3) Ensuring that a significant part of the teacher evaluation system be based on other sources besides state mandated testing and student achievement.
  - 4) Involving all stakeholder groups in the creation of teacher evaluation systems that ensure evaluations are related to their instructional area.
  - 5) Providing high-quality and ongoing training for assessors in teacher evaluation systems.
  - 6) Creating a requirement for administrators to receive yearly instruction on student data, teacher evaluations and best practice teaching.
  - 7) Requiring administrators to receive ongoing updates and professional development on recognition and implementation of state and federal education requirements.
  - 8) Focusing on high-quality research to inform and evaluate existing evaluation systems.
  - 9) Committing sufficient resources to create and monitor high-quality, productive assessment.
  - 10) Committing sufficient resources for schools to train, educate and assist teachers in developing locally established evaluation systems.
  - 11) Protecting teacher privacy in the release of student data to the media.
- R) That will guarantee education personnel previously employed in a district that has been annexed, consolidated, or merged into another district shall be entitled to all the rights and benefits to which they would otherwise be entitled to had they been continuously employed in the district that was annexed, consolidated, or merged.
- S) That would protect individual rights when consolidation occurs in and PreK-12+ ISD and/or ensure that consolidation is done using the concepts of current Michigan and federal labor laws and that employees who are part of a consolidation are treated as original employees of the receiving district.

- T) That prohibits the privatization/outsourcing of public-school services and responsibilities. MEA will continue to pursue legislative activities that discourage all attempts to privatize/outsourcing any district employees and programs. This legislation must include, but not be limited to, requiring a cost benefit study prior to any decision by a school board to privatize/outsourcing support services in any school building.
- U) That would remove the prohibitions against bargaining that were adopted in the Public Employee Relations Act (PERA, PA 112 of 1994 and PA 260 of 2011).
- V) Requiring all studies/requests for proposals (RFPs) conducted by the administration of a school district regarding privatizations/outsourcing of any bargaining unit/employee group be distributed 180 days prior to any decision by the board to all bargaining units within the school district.
- W) That prohibits school district and ISD consolidation plans that include contractual protections from privatization/outsourcing and that do not result from the collective bargaining process with all ESP and EA stakeholders.
- X) Insisting that any PreK-12+ online/distance online/distance/virtual and other learning experiences must be staffed by a certified and qualified teacher and subject to the collective bargaining process.
- Y) To institute a superintendent evaluation system that considers both community and teacher input.

***Continuing Concerns:*** These issues represent ideas to which MEA is committed but which may not currently be the subject of legislative activity/action.

MEA supports legislation:

- A) That preserves current opportunities and enhances future participation by all public-school education professionals in education decision making.
- B) That will advance equal opportunity rights for women, all gender identities, and minority employees in education.
- C) That preserve and strengthens the licensure/certification rights of all public education employees.
- D) To enable public education support professionals to collect unemployment benefits during periods of time for which they are not compensated (e.g., summer break, spring break, winter breaks, etc.)
- E) To overturn the impact of *Smith v MESC*, thereby enabling employees to collect unemployment benefits where such employment is due to a labor dispute to which the employees' bargaining unit is not a party.

- F) That supports tenure as a means of guaranteeing due process and just cause in the dismissal of public-school employees and supports statewide legislation that mandates school employee dismissal be subject to binding, impartial third-party arbitration.
- G) That supports due process and just cause rights for probationary teachers, educational support professionals, and other professional staff not eligible for tenure.
- H) That supports initiatives designed to reduce the length of the probationary period and make probationary evaluations meaningful in obtaining tenure.
- I) To preserve and protect the employment rights of substitute teachers.
- J) To secure the election of community college boards on a one-person/one-vote basis for sub-units within public community college districts.

*The initiatives, goals and objectives present in this document are not presented so as to indicate a priority level or designation.*