



MEA

Legislative Priorities 2025-2027

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 2025-27 include:

- Provide adequate funding for PreK-12+ and higher education, including increased compensation for educational professionals to attract and retain excellent educators in the profession.
- Retain and expand subjects of bargaining to ensure education professionals have a voice in the workplace.
- Provide a high-quality, defined-benefit retirement plan to help attract and retain quality public school education professionals.
- Ensure all active school employees and retirees have access to high-quality, affordable health care.
- Increase resources and measures supporting school safety and protecting education professionals from workplace violence.
- Increase resources to support mental health for students and educational professionals, including addressing the impacts of mobile technology and social media in school settings.
- Provide all students with certified and properly trained educational professionals and a robust, effective, flexible curriculum that focuses on improving literacy and preparing students to be engaged members of society and the workplace.
- Support the whole student by establishing appropriate ratios of students to teachers, counselors and other education professionals.
- Incorporate local associations in all local educational decision-making processes.

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

2025-27

As recommended by the MEA Legislation Commission on February 4, 2025.

Commission Members:

Melissa VanGessel, Chair, Region 9

John Duffy, Region 6

Sid Kardon, MEA-Retired

Colleen Pilgrim, MAHE

Felicia Naimark, Region 10

Jeff Bopp, Region 5

Kim Largen, Region 5

Kecia Jones, Region 7

Joe Humphrey, Region 7

Brad Wenz, Region 6

Dave Daly, Region 2

Deborah Rickert, Higher Ed ESP

Wendy Winston, NEA Director

MEA Staff:

Brett Smith, MEA Vice President

David Michelson, Lobbyist

Andy Neumann, Lobbyist

Tanner Delpier, Economist

Doug Wilcox, Staff Attorney

Paul Helder, Retirement Specialist

Rebecca Ernst, Executive Office Administrative Specialist

As adopted by the MEA Board of Directors on April 11, 2025.

Legislative Priorities 2025-27

Preamble

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

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

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), and for the health care plan and carrier of their choice without restriction.

Introduction

The Michigan Education Association Legislative Priorities are presented in the form of three core initiatives for Michigan public education students and MEA members: Quality Public Education, Funding, and Professional Conditions. 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 Public Education

MEA supports a Quality Public Education 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 address 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 to retain and expand subjects of bargaining in order to provide our members with the highest quality working conditions.

Such conditions shall provide a healthy, 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; 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.

III. Funding

MEA supports adequate funding for Michigan's publicly funded schools. Funding adequacy requires both sufficient total resources and equitable distribution of those resources.

A sufficient level of funding is necessary to provide all students with an adequate education, and all educators with fair compensation and high-quality working conditions. Education funding in Michigan is currently insufficient. Consequently, MEA supports policies that increase total revenue available for education and opposes policies that reduce those resources.

An equitable distribution of funding is necessary to produce fair levels of support between publicly funded schools. Institutions serving more students with added needs require higher levels of support.

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.

I. Quality Public Education

MEA supports legislation:

- A) That addresses the total social, emotional, economic, and educational needs of all public PreK-12 and higher education students in the State of Michigan.
- B) To ensure that all schools which are receiving public funds are adhering and reporting to the same local, state, and federal mandates for complete transparency.
- C) That provides for all schools receiving state funds to be staffed by certified professional personnel who are accessible to all students.
- D) To improve 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, including that they shall be used for student assessment and growth and not be used for teacher or school evaluations. Without priority or limitation, these tests will be:
 - 1) Administered in a safe environment for both staff and students.
 - 2) Age and developmentally appropriate.
 - 3) Culturally unbiased.
 - 4) Designed to allow for accommodations.
 - 5) Designed to provide immediate feedback.
 - 6) Designed to remove appropriate data (i.e., students with chronic absences, test anxiety, parental opt-outs, exclusion of randomly selected test items or inadequate test taking time).
 - 7) Eliminated during a public health crisis.
 - 8) Given in optimal and consistent testing conditions including dates and times.
 - 9) Linguistically appropriate.
 - 10) Provide for socio-economic equitable conditions (i.e., calculators, headphones, air conditioning)
 - 11) Used only for student assessment and/or student evaluation.
 - 12) Reflective of the current school year.
 - 13) Relevant, equitable, and data based.
 - 14) Used non-punitively.
 - 15) Used sparingly to allow for classroom time to be maximized.

- G) That ensures safe, secure, and healthy schools and campuses, which includes reasonable gun safety legislation, such as prohibiting sales and ownership of assault weapons to persons under the age of 21.
- 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, sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.
- J) To ensure and expand mental health resources that meet the needs of our students in pre-K through higher education.
- K) To form a commission to develop a process for addressing and reducing school truancy.
- L) To establish state legislation creating a maximum student-to-teacher class size ratio at 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.
- M) To establish state legislation creating a maximum student to school counselor ratio of 250 to 1 as recommended by the National Association of School Counselors.
- N) To develop a policy to significantly decrease student-to-provider ratio for social workers, psychologists, behavior interventionists, and all other ancillary services.
- O) To define the K-12 school year length as 1098 hours regardless of the number of days as mutually agreed upon through the collective bargaining process.
- P) 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.
- Q) To ensure that public early childhood education programs are staffed by fully certified teachers.
- R) To require public early childhood and PreK-12+ through higher education institutions to support programs of educational excellence with adequate numbers of education professionals.
- S) To secure the popular election of intermediate school district board members.
- T) To secure the popular election of public school academy board members.
- U) To support the statewide election of college and university boards/trustees and the State Board of Education.
- V) To retain local control of the school calendar as a subject of collective bargaining.
- W) To respect the integrity and autonomy of local control for local school districts.

- X) To promote cooperation between 2-year and 4-year higher education institutions regarding the Michigan Transfer Agreement (MTA) legislation.
- Y) To return the right and responsibility of local school districts to inform their constituents of millages, bonding, and ballot issues that affect students.

Continuing Concerns: These issues represent ideas to which MEA is committed but 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 enhances 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 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, Multilingual Education and Diversity Education including:
- 1) Advocating for education professionals to provide access to grade-appropriate instructional and reading materials that foster Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI).
 - 2) Indemnifying education professionals who foster and deliver Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) content and instruction from frivolous lawsuits and disciplinary action.
- K) To preserve and improve multilingual 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) 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.
 - 2) Adopt a policy for teaching hygiene and public health awareness (i.e., pandemic preparedness).
 - 3) Adopt a policy to inform stakeholders about substance use and abuse.
 - 4) 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.

II. Professional Conditions

MEA supports legislation:

- A) 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.
- B) To prohibit discrimination based on race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, color, weight, height, national origin, citizenship, age, marital status, disability, or 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.
- C) That would require the State of Michigan to provide low-interest loans and/or flexible repayment plans to probationary and substitute educators to complete the required credits for a professional certificate.

- D) That allows income tax credits for payment of student loans and establishes a fund to provide partial or full payment of the balance of student loans for educators to commit to the profession.
- E) 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) Determining who will be the policyholder of any employee group insurance benefit.
 - 9) The composition of school improvement committees.
 - 10) The decision of whether to provide or allow interdistrict or intradistrict open enrollment opportunities in a school district or the selection of grade levels or schools in which to allow an open enrollment opportunity.
 - 11) The decision of whether to act as an authorizing body to grant a contract to organize and operate one or more public schools.
 - 12) 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.
 - 13) The use of volunteers in providing services at its schools.
 - 14) Decisions concerning the 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.
 - 15) Any compensation of additional work assignment to the employee.
 - 16) Decisions about the development, content, standards, procedures, adoption and implementation of the method of compensation decisions.
 - 17) The right to bargain subcontracting, privatization, consolidation of programs and/or districts.
 - 18) Establish due process for all educators that do not invoke the Tenure Act.
- F) Preserving the contractual right to bargain release time for union work.
- G) To preserve and strengthen state actuarial funding levels for the Michigan Public School Employees Retirement System (MPSERS).
- H) 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.
- I) To allow ALL education professionals to return to or select the defined benefit plan in MPSERS.

- J) 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 restore the ability to purchase service credit.
 - 6) 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 chosen the Defined Contribution plan to alter their choice retroactively to the Pension Plus 2 plan.
 - 7) To ensure a defined benefit plan similar to the Member Investment Plan (MIP).
 - 8) To require all newly hired public school employees (including charter school employees) to participate in the MPSERS.
 - 9) 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 their first \$10,000 of MPSERS reportable income, whichever is later.
 - 10) To eliminate the taxation of all pension programs.
- K) 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.
- L) To implement and expand staff peer assistance/mentoring programs for all education professionals.
- M) To provide pay equity for all full-time and part-time MEA members.
- N) 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.
- O) Ensuring that education evaluation systems are subjects of collective bargaining including, but not limited to:
- 1) Expanding the 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 the evaluation system be based on other sources besides state-mandated testing and student achievement.
 - 3) Providing the ability to create evaluation systems that ensure evaluations are related to their instructional area.
 - 4) Providing high-quality and ongoing training for assessors in evaluation systems.

- 5) Creating a requirement for administrators to receive yearly instruction on student data and best teaching practices.
 - 6) Requiring administrators to receive ongoing updates and professional development on recognition and implementation of state and federal education requirements.
 - 7) Focusing on high-quality research to inform and assess existing evaluation systems.
 - 8) Committing sufficient resources to create and monitor high-quality, productive student assessments.
 - 9) Committing sufficient resources for schools to train, educate, and assist teachers in developing locally established evaluation systems.
 - 10) Protecting teacher privacy in the release of student data to the media.
- P) That will guarantee education professionals 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 had they been continuously employed in the district that was annexed, consolidated, or merged.
- Q) 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.
- R) 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.
- S) Requiring all studies/requests for proposals (RFPs) conducted by the administration of a publicly funded school 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 publicly funded schools.
- T) 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.
- U) Insisting that any early childhood to higher education online/distance online/distance/virtual and other learning experiences must be staffed by certified and qualified educators and subject to the collective bargaining process.
- V) To institute a superintendent evaluation system that considers the input of both in-district community members and education professionals.

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

MEA supports legislation:

- A) That maintains current opportunities and increases future participation by all public school education professionals in education decision-making.
- B) That will advance equal opportunities for employees in education regardless of age, gender, national origin, race, ethnic background, religious beliefs, citizenship, sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.
- 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 extended periods of time for which they are not compensated.
- 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 a legacy tenure, maintaining tenure status upon employment in a new district.
- G) 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.
- H) That supports due process and just cause rights for probationary teachers, educational support professionals, and other professional staff not eligible for tenure.
- I) That supports initiatives designed to reduce the length of the probationary period.
- J) That creates initiatives designed to focus the evaluation process on supporting probationary staff with the end goal of obtaining tenure.
- K) To preserve and protect employment rights including the right to collective bargaining for substitute teachers.
- L) To secure the election of community college boards on a one-person/one-vote basis for subunits within public community college districts.

III. Funding

MEA supports legislation:

- A) That would hold harmless ISDs (intermediate school districts), community colleges and the School Aid Fund 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 would come from the General Fund.

- B) That would require sunset dates for all tax abatements, credits and waivers.
- C) To maintain and increase the State General Fund appropriations for higher education institutions.
- D) To ensure all active employees and retired members have access to high-quality, affordable health care.
- E) That maintains and increases 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) Before-School and After-School Child Care Programs
 - 5) Career and Tech Education
 - 6) District Safety
 - 7) Fine and Performing Arts
 - 8) Fitness
 - 9) Free School Meal Programs
 - 10) Gifted and Talented
 - 11) In-school Driver's Education Programs
 - 12) ISD Operations
 - 13) Local and National Health Crisis
 - 14) Nutrition
 - 15) Physical Education
 - 16) Physical and Mental Health and Wellness (social, emotional, and physical well-being)
 - 17) Preschool
 - 18) Reading Initiative
 - 19) Safe and Secure Schools
 - 20) School Modernization and Infrastructure
 - 21) Small Class Size Initiative
 - 22) Special Education
 - 23) Technology
 - 24) Transportation (criteria should include geographic factors)
- F) To increase and maintain state funding for professional development for education professionals for all certification/licensure.
- G) To ensure that every media center and school library be staffed with a certified media specialist/librarian and includes funding for pathways toward a media specialist certification for education professionals.
- H) To increase state funding for public early childhood through higher education and increase equitable distribution.
- I) To enhance the school aid fund to support an increase in compensation for attracting and retaining education professionals.

- J) To maintain and increase resources for students “at risk.”
- K) To maintain and increase resources for Multi-Language Learners (MLL) whether mainstreamed or in self-contained classrooms or programs.
- L) To maintain and increase funding of all special educational programs to assure the state meets its full and true obligation.
- M) To maintain and increase funding levels for community colleges and address the changes that have occurred since the original funding was established in 1984.
- N) To improve the funding mechanism to address the changes in enrollment, demographics, and other non-state revenue sources for community colleges.
- O) To maintain and increase the state funding needed to provide quality academic, vocational, and technical offerings at each of Michigan’s public colleges and universities.
- P) To oppose any appropriation of public funds, including vouchers, benefitting non-public or charter early childhood through higher education schools.
- Q) To maintain and increase the state funding needed to provide quality mental health services for early childhood through higher education students and education professionals.
- R) To maintain and increase state funding for quality mental health professional development and curricular resources.

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

MEA supports legislation:

- A) That provides funding programs in higher education based on student needs and enrollment.
- B) That offsets the costs of post-secondary education for students through funding innovations.
- C) To provide state funding, including differential tuition, to allow out-of-district community college students to enroll in programs not offered in their college home districts.
- D) To maintain and increase funding for health and safety measures in schools and campuses (i.e., personal protective equipment (PPE), safety equipment, water/air quality).
- E) To maintain and increase funding for school and campus safety initiatives including the prevention of gun violence.
- F) To implement an emergency health and medical leave policy (i.e., isolation, quarantine, and paid leave).

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