



AFT Michigan

PRESS RELEASE

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AFT Michigan members educate legislators about the effect education cuts will have on students and the Michigan economy

LANSING — The American Federation of Teachers—Michigan brought more than 300 bus drivers, teachers, professors, counselors, and other educators from across the state to educate legislators at the state Capitol about the far-reaching impacts of their cuts to education on Tuesday.

“The proposed cuts to education funding are unconscionable and the legislature should restore them immediately,” said AFT Michigan President David Hecker. “Monday’s revenue estimate shows clearly that we don’t need to cut education. We have the money. The citizens of Michigan don’t want to see education slashed just so corporate CEOs can get a tax break. We need to invest in education in order to reinvent our state and rebuild our economy.”

AFT Michigan brought members to Lansing in order to make the real-world costs of ideological budget decisions plain to lawmakers. Cuts to education funding, legislation undermining collective bargaining, and proposals to effectively eliminate due process for teachers were all focal points for the citizen lobbyists.

Wayne State University professor Charlie Parrish expressed deep concern that the proposed budget will cripple Michigan’s fragile economic recovery. “A strong Michigan future is dependent on a strong public education system—from early childhood through higher education. The proposed cuts to our colleges and universities will necessitate unaffordable tuition increases and significantly limit access for a generation of students.”

“People need to understand that it’s not just the per-pupil cuts. What’s hiding in this budget is the zeroing out of \$71 million in categorical funding for services like bilingual education and rural transportation that are essential to the students who need the most help,” said Keith Johnson of the Detroit Federation of Teachers.

Many teachers expressed concern with recent legislative proposals to effectively dismantle the due process system established by Michigan’s Teacher Tenure Act. “We agree with the Governor’s Education Roundtable that we should not put every tenure case before a single Administrative Law Judge and think the hearing process can be substantially expedited,” said East Detroit history teacher Lincoln Stocks. “But for any of these proposals to be successful, it is absolutely imperative that we develop a comprehensive evaluation system that analyzes student growth and professional teaching standards.

Max Boettger of Onaway High School added, “Everyone in education acknowledges that the vast majority of teachers are seldom, if ever, provided a real evaluation and we need to fix that before raising the stakes on a broken system. AFT Michigan has developed such an evaluation system and is working with districts across the state to implement it.”

In addition to fighting attacks on Michigan’s teachers, support staff, and professors, AFT Michigan members urged lawmakers to take up real, substantive reforms that improve education.

“I have never seen such a wanton attack on our state’s future,” said Rodger Bartles of the Dearborn Federation of School Employees. “In Dearborn, we’re working to launch a 5-year high school program in which students would be able to earn an associate’s degree while still in high school. All that progress is threatened if these cuts go through.”

"My number one concern is doing my job – preparing Michigan's young minds to carry our state onward and upward," said Mary Beck, an adjunct professor at Henry Ford Community College. "Gutting funding for education is like unilateral disarmament and hurts our students. We won't be able to compete now, or in the future, without making it a priority to invest in education."

AFT Michigan is a union of 97 locals and 35,000 members working across the state in preschool, K-12, intermediate school districts, community colleges, and universities.

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