

Issue: Michigan Education

## Republicans Attack, Democrats Attract Teachers

Michigan would like to be a top 10 education state, but by nearly all measures, the state's schools are closer to the bottom than the top of our nation's school rankings. While most people would agree that teachers matter, the Rand Corporation's research says they are the single most important factor in improving student achievement.

### How are Michigan teachers faring under Republican leadership?

- National Education Association studies show that average teacher pay adjusted for higher costs of living (including higher education, retirement and healthcare) have declined 11.5 percent since 2010. Michigan has the fourth highest decline in the nation.
- From 2010 to 2017, average teacher salaries have declined 1.2%. An EdSurge study said this decline was due to minimal salary increases (with actual rollbacks in some districts), fewer experienced teachers and lower pay levels at charter schools.
- Michigan's teachers make 82 percent of what they could make in other jobs. Their retirement plans do not compensate for this difference.
- Since 2008, Michigan college students studying to become teachers have declined more than 50 percent. Enrollment in teacher prep programs has dropped 23 percent in just two short years (per most recent data – 2015)

### What has been done in the last eight years of Republican leadership?

- Pensions have been cut. Teacher retirements are now unpredictable, more costly, and more likely to be insufficient.
- Classroom funding has been cut.
- Collective bargaining on teacher tenure has been deemed illegal.
- Money was taken from teachers' salaries for healthcare. This was later ruled unconstitutional.
- Unions have been targeted with Right to Work laws.
- Pay has not kept pace with the cost of living because Republican lawmakers favor corporate tax benefits over schools in state budgets.

## What are Democrats doing about it?

Democrats are taking action with bills to prepare, attract, support and retain great teachers.

### Incentives to Attract, Mentor and Train Teachers at Schools that Need them the Most

- Provide scholarships to those who have worked more than a year at an early childhood center and are enrolled in a related undergraduate program. (SB765, HB5466)
- Create a program to encourage high school students in underrepresented groups to pursue a career in teaching. (SB764, HB5465)
- At economically disadvantaged schools, provide:
  - Up to \$1,000 stipends annually to student teachers. (SB766, HB5476)
  - Student-loan repayment grants to eligible teachers. (SB767, HB 5467)
  - \$3,000-\$5,000 one-time bonuses for newly hired teachers or \$1,000 to experienced teachers relocating from a higher economic area. (SB768, HB5468)

- \$1,800 annual bonuses for math, science or special education teachers. (SB769, HB5469)
- \$1,000 scholarships per semester for teachers attending master's programs. (SB771, HB5475)
- Award experienced teachers \$500 for each newly certified teacher mentored (SB770, HB5470)

### Change Provisions in Recent Bills that are Unfair to Teachers

- When teachers choose the hybrid part pension/part 401(k) type plan, they are responsible for paying half of any underfunding that occurs in the pension. Underfunding occurs when employers make promises for the future and then put too little money in the plan today for that promise to be realized in the future. This generally happens when fund managers are overly optimistic about market growth rates. This is *not* something teachers have any input on. Yet they are held responsible under today's hybrid retirement plan. This bill would reverse that. (SB772, HB5471)
- Remove the hard cap on health care premiums and instead require employees to pay 20 percent of healthcare costs. (SB773, HB5472)
- Repeals a law that halted automatic seniority-based (step) pay increases when the government employee union contract had expired and the replacement was not yet signed. (SB776, HB5477)

### Change Bills that Created Unequal Treatment Among Teachers

- Repeal laws regarding Right-To-Work for public and private employees, which will strengthen teacher unions. (SB724-725, HB4146-4147)
- There is currently a \$29 billion underfunded retirement liability. All traditional public schools are responsible for contributing to pay down this liability. This bill would require charter schools to also contribute to this. (SB777, HB5478)

### Support and Retain Teachers

- Creates tax credits for teachers who use personal funds to purchase classroom supplies (SB25, HB5484)
- When evaluating a teacher's performance, mentoring would be accounted for. (SB774, HB5473)
- When determining teacher compensation in Detroit Community Schools, advanced degrees would be considered (SB778, HB5479)
- Awards Michigan Teachers of the Year with \$1,000 each to be used for professional development or classroom needs. Today there is one Teacher of the Year. This would increase it to one for every region and more if the population per region meets certain levels, so there would be 13 using current population numbers. (SB780, HB5481)
- Sets the student-teacher ratio at no greater than 20:1 for K-4<sup>th</sup> grades. (SB779, HB5480)
- Reimburse teachers for the cost of earning a subject area qualification in subjects with a critical shortage. Teachers would commit to working 3 years in that field or remit back the reimbursement. (SB781, HB5482)

## Include Teachers in a Council of Education

Teacher input should be an important part of any educational goal setting and policymaking. This bill creates a 15-member state teacher council tasked with making recommendations to policymakers. These 15 members would represent various arms of the educational establishment and at least four members would be public school teachers. (SB782, HB5483)

## When will all these bills be put into practice?

Currently, each of these bills have been introduced in the Senate and the House and have been referred to the corresponding Education Committee where they have been waiting since January 2018 for the Republican-controlled majority to take action.

## Sources:

Abamu, Jenny, April 5, 2018 “The Data Tells All: Teacher Salaries Have Been Declining for Years”  
<https://www.edsurge.com/news/2018-04-05-the-data-tells-all-teacher-salaries-have-been-declining-for-years>

Guerra, Jennifer, July 24, 2017 “The average teacher salary in Michigan is \$61,978. Here's why that number doesn't mean much.”  
<http://www.michiganradio.org/post/average-teacher-salary-michigan-61978-heres-why-number-doesnt-mean-much>

Accessed October 7, 2018, Teachers for Michigan  
<http://teachersformichigan.com/>

Guerra, Jennifer, July 26, 2017 “Here's how teacher pay stacks up to other comparable jobs”  
<http://www.michiganradio.org/post/heres-how-teacher-pay-stacks-other-comparable-jobs>

Derringe, Nancy, August 3, 2017 “Fewer college students want to be teachers and why it matters (searchable database)”  
<https://www.bridgemi.com/talent-education/fewer-college-students-want-be-teachers-and-why-it-matters-searchable-database>

Gongwer, January 26, 2018 “Dems Introduce Plan for Attracting, Retaining Teachers”  
<https://mitechnews.com/politics/dems-introduce-plan-attracting-retaining-teachers/>

Michigan Votes.Org – Your lawmakers’ votes at your finger tips  
<https://www.michiganvotes.org/Legislation.aspx?ID=180530>

“Teachers Matter: Understanding Teachers' Impact on Student Achievement”  
<https://www.rand.org/education/projects/measuring-teacher-effectiveness/teachers-matter.html>

Robinson, Mitchell, April 26, 2018 “Behind Michigan’s Teacher Shortage, a Manufactured Crisis”  
<https://progressive.org/public-school-shakedown/behind-michigans-teacher-shortage-a-manufactured-crisis-180426/>