



2018 Gubernatorial Candidate Questionnaire

AFT Michigan is a union of PreK-12 teachers and support personnel, university faculty, staff and graduate employees, community college instructors and administrative employees and credit union employees. The mission of AFT Michigan is to strengthen worker voice, advance the education institutions in which our members work, and build a progressive movement committed to achieving these goals.

The AFT Michigan Administrative Board is considering endorsing a candidate for governor prior to the 2018 primary elections. Responses to this questionnaire will be shared with our local leaders and members, in addition to being posted on our website.

The deadline to submit the questionnaire is December 12, 2017. Completed questionnaires should be emailed to jrowe@aftmichigan.org.

AFT Michigan invites candidates who return this questionnaire to join us at our Leadership Summit on January 13, 2018. The forum will be held 12 p.m. - 2 p.m. with local leaders from across the state.

If you require additional space to answer questions, please attach additional documents. If you have questions or would like clarification on any part of the questionnaire, please contact Julie Rowe at jrowe@aftmichigan.org or (734) 735-8780.

CANDIDATE INFORMATION

Candidate Name: Abdul El-Sayed

Party Affiliation: Democratic

Website: <https://abdulformichigan.com>

Candidate Signature:  Date: 12/12/17

Please briefly describe your background (including whether you have ever held office, worked in public education, or been a union member).

All written answers attached

PreK-12, COMMUNITY COLLEGE, AND UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

<u>YES</u>	NO	Would you restore funding and increase investment in our public schools, colleges and universities?
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How would you approach tax policy to provide increased investment in education?

How would you make education funding at all levels fair and equitable?

How would you make our public education systems more holistic and cohesive, from early childhood to university?

How would you protect students, faculty and staff from discrimination and harassment based on socioeconomic status, disability, gender, religion, national origin, race, immigration status, sexual orientation, and gender expression?

PreK-12 EDUCATION

<u>YES</u>	NO	Would you provide necessary funding to expand access to quality early childhood education programs?
<u>YES</u>	NO	Would you support mandatory full-day kindergarten for all students in Michigan?
<u>YES</u>	NO	Would you actively oppose all private school voucher proposals and other plans intended to divert taxpayer dollars from public schools to private schools?
<u>YES</u>	NO	Would you support legislation that would provide funding for local school districts to reduce their class size, particularly for schools serving high numbers of disadvantaged students?
<u>YES</u>	NO	Would you support policies to reduce the amount of standardized testing required for Michigan students?
<u>YES</u>	NO	Would you support policies to fully involve paraprofessionals in the development of students' Individualized Education Plans?
<u>YES</u>	NO	Would you restore the right of school support staff to bargain over privatization of school services?
<u>YES</u>	NO	Would you support requiring full financial and academic transparency of the education management organizations that run charter and cyber schools in Michigan?

What measures would you take to address the current educator shortage in Michigan?

How would you address the achievement gaps between groups of students based on race and socioeconomic status?

COMMUNITY COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

<u>YES</u>	NO	Would you support returning to a university funding model with the state providing the majority of university funding, allowing tuition to be very affordable?
<u>YES</u>	NO	Would you appoint people who support workers, and our freedom to join together in unions, to college and university boards?
<u>YES</u>	NO	Would you protect academic freedom from partisan attacks?
<u>YES</u>	NO	Would you support repealing the prohibition on allowing graduate student research assistants to unionize?

What would you do to make public college and university education affordable?

How would you address the discrepancies in compensation and job security between tenure-track and non-tenure track faculty at colleges and universities?

How would you reverse the erosion of tenure-track faculty positions?

How would you address the expansion of online education in higher education?

LABOR RIGHTS

<u>YES</u>	NO	Would you champion efforts to repeal existing "right-to-work" laws?
<u>YES</u>	NO	Would you champion legislation to restore collective bargaining rights stripped from the Public Employment Relations Act, including returning the ability to negotiate teacher evaluation procedures and PreK-12 payroll dues deduction?
<u>YES</u>	NO	Would you publicly affirm the importance of unions and urge employers not to interfere when workers are deciding whether to form or join a union?
<u>YES</u>	NO	Would you be willing to issue statements, write letters, and attend rallies supporting organizing campaigns to support the rights of workers to form a union?
<u>YES</u>	NO	Would you oppose legislation to further erode the collective bargaining rights of public sector employees?

JOBS AND THE ECONOMY

<u>YES</u>	NO	Would you support raising the state's minimum wage to \$15 an hour?
<u>YES</u>	NO	Would you oppose state budget cuts that weaken the state's social safety net?
<u>YES</u>	NO	Would you support repealing the pension tax, restoring the homestead property tax credit and restoring tax deductions for children, charitable contributions, college tuition and adoption expenses?
<u>YES</u>	NO	Would you support paid sick day legislation?
<u>YES</u>	NO	Would you support creating a progressive income tax structure?
<u>YES</u>	NO	Do you support prevailing wage for construction work?
<u>YES</u>	NO	How would you work to end pay discrimination against women and people of color?

GOOD GOVERNMENT

<u>YES</u>	NO	Would you support efforts to promote greater voter participation, including early and no reason absentee voting?
<u>YES</u>	NO	Would you support efforts to reform the redistricting process to eliminate partisan gerrymandering and bring fairness to the drawing of legislative and congressional district boundaries?

AFT 2018 Questionnaire Answers
Abdul for Michigan - 12/12/17

Candidate Information

Please briefly describe your background (including whether you have ever held office, worked in public education, or been a union member).

This movement is about a politics of purpose. I am driven by a core belief in Michigan's people - our potential and the promise of our future. I believe in what we can build if we unite - from our cities to our farms, from our oldest communities to our newest arrivals, from our Mitten to our Upper Peninsula. I was raised in a diverse family. My father, Mohamed, was the eldest son of a tomato salesman and a homemaker in Alexandria, Egypt. My stepmother, Jackie, grew up in Gratiot County, where her family have been public school teachers and small-business owners for generations.

I was born and raised in Michigan. This state has made countless small investments in me and others in my generation - quality public schools, clean air and water, and an economy that kept my parents employed. But today, state government is failing to make these same investments in our children. Gridlock, unimaginative leadership, and a callous disregard for our most vulnerable have left us with government we cannot trust.

I am a physician, educator, and public servant. I served as a professor before taking on the role of Health Director in Detroit to rebuild Detroit's Health Department. In that role, I saw firsthand what happens when we do not dignify the needs of our kids in their schools. While inspecting Detroit schools to hold them to code after teachers conducted a sickout in protest over school conditions, I saw students who wore their jackets until the afternoon because the boiler wouldn't turn on, and gym floors buckling due to mold. That's why, as Health Director, I focused on schools as a means of building towards increased wellbeing for children. That meant implementing universal access to glasses for Detroit Public School students after we realized that 30% of the children who needed glasses didn't have them. And, when we heard about Flint, we implemented universal water lead screening across 360 Detroit Public Schools buildings so that our kids weren't being poisoned in the place where we concentrate them most of the day for most of the year.

I am running because the Michigan I grew up in made me who I am today, and I believe that every child, whether they be from Detroit or Kalkaska, deserves the same.

Pre-K, Community College & University Education

How would you approach tax policy to provide increased investment in education?

I am a progressive – I believe in a world that is more just, more equitable, and more sustainable. That means that those who benefit most from the system must pay the most into it. I support a progressive tax system where corporations and the rich pay their fair share. Rather than give tax cuts to lure corporations temporarily to Michigan before those jobs are sent overseas or automated, we have to build a 21st Century economy by investing in people. The only thing that has ever created a job is a person with an idea and the means to move themselves, their goods, and their ideas around.

This all starts with education, so it is imperative that we use our tax dollars make these investments in our future. I would support establishing a progressive tax system for Michigan. We estimate that a progressive tax reform would yield an additional \$870 million per year in new revenue, which would free up \$236 million for public K-12 education. Further, our state spends almost \$1B -- nearly 2% of its annual revenue -- on tax credits to corporations. I believe these funds are better spent on investments in our children.

I believe in universal pre-K. To fund it, I am committed to pursuing a series of early childhood-focused tax credits similar to Louisiana's School Readiness Tax Credits (SRTC) to ensure that children are receiving quality education, even in the absence of universal pre-K. These credits would include refundable tax credits for families who enroll kids in early childhood systems; tax credits for ECE providers based on their quality rating and the percentage of subsidy-eligible kids they serve; refundable credits for ECE workers who pursue higher education/credentials; and credits and for businesses who provide child care at work.

Finally, I believe in legalizing marijuana and leveraging at least 50% of the nearly \$125M expected in tax revenue toward investing in education.

How would you make education funding at all levels fair and equitable?

School facilities funding, which is entirely driven by local property tax dollars, remains a large source of educational inequality in Michigan. The average property tax millage raises about \$267, but the value of a millage ranges from \$100 to \$600 across our communities, which means that, at even property tax rates, school districts with the highest 10% of property values can afford 6 times the facilities improvements than districts with the lowest 10%.

Our administration recognizes the need to reformulate Proposal A to ensure equity for every child. We would eliminate the gap between the minimum and basic foundation grant, increasing funding for at-risk students, and incorporating this funding into the existing foundation formula. This increase would also help pay for teacher salaries, school counselors, and social workers to provide wrap around services for children in the most underprivileged zip codes.

Further, in order to solve our school infrastructure issue, we have proposed the creation of a Michigan School Facilities Bank to be used to improve the outdated and dangerous facilities in our schools. This Bank would buy back unused buildings from school districts, thus infusing local communities with the capital they need to make long lasting improvements on existing facilities.

How would you make our public education systems more holistic and cohesive, from early childhood to university?

To make our public education systems more cohesive, we must put the “public” back in public education. That means getting private for-profit interests out of K-12 education, restoring funding for our public universities and community colleges, and providing more public supports for the care of young children through the establishment of universal pre-K. As governor, I will work to position our entire education system to meet the needs and develop the unique talents of Michigan’s diverse student body.

Children's fundamental needs do not drastically change as they grow older. While our early child system, including programs like Head Start, has always focused on the holistic development of infants and toddlers, our K-12 system has been pushed further and further in a content-heavy direction at the expense of children's health and well-being -- despite the fact that emotional intelligence and social skills are some of the most fundamental labor assets in the 21st century knowledge economy.

We must educate the whole child. We will invest in improving students’ physical, social, and mental health, and in engaging their minds, their families, and their communities. We will do this by funding early childhood developmental screening (Early On) and expanding Medicaid-funded early screening services, including vision testing, in schools with a \$10 million investment in state and local capacity to access grants. We must also integrate mental health care with schools and hire additional school counselors and social workers. In order to maintain accountability, I would reform the School Reform Office to perform health and well-being audits to determine whether students are receiving the necessary services. Additionally, we will work to fully fund special education -- largely through reforms to the funding formula and a focus on establishing and following through on students’ individualized educational programs (IEPs).

The work of creating supports that meet the needs of diverse students extends to higher education as well. To ensure that all students can enter and succeed at Michigan’s public colleges and universities, I will work to: expand dual enrollment classes to ease the burden of college costs for students; provide more child care on college campuses for students who have children; and better align financial aid counseling with additional supports (ex. EITC, SNAP, WIC, etc.) to help non-traditional students receive the aid they need to work and live. Additionally, I will work with Michigan’s Schools of Education to encourage more teacher residencies, and make sure that teachers are trained to meet the needs of diverse students before they graduate.

To build a truly cohesive educational system, we must also provide students with college and career pathways that lead to well-paid, stable careers. Expanding vocational education programs and making the system work seamlessly between K-12 and higher ed is crucial to this effort. In particular, we must make sure that our college and career curricula are aligned with the curriculums of our community college and public universities, so that students can feed directly into our higher and vocational education system. We must integrate unions into reimagining vocational apprenticeship programs to create synergistic 1- and 2-year associate's degree programs that integrate the best of in-class and on-the-job training for students.

How would you protect students, faculty and staff from discrimination and harassment based on socioeconomic status, disability, gender, religion, national origin, race, immigration status, sexual orientation, and gender expression?

Bullying is a primary concern in education today - both among students as well as faculty and staff. Michigan recently passed a comprehensive anti-bullying law in 2011, though the law is deficient in several ways. First, our state law fails to enumerate specific groups protected under the law; it fails to include a procedure for referring the victim, perpetrator and others to counseling and mental health services; and Michigan's model policy fails to enumerate exactly how data should be reported to the State. I would seek to amend the anti-bullying law to remedy these deficiencies to support a safer school environment.

One group that is disproportionately marginalized in schools are members of the LGBTQ+ community. We must work to address the particular challenges that these students and staff face, including access to bathrooms of choice. Further, protection under state anti-discrimination law remains a challenge, and I will seek to amend Elliott-Larsen to enumerate LGBTQ+ Michiganders as a protected class.

Pre K-12 Education

What measures would you take to address the current educator shortage in Michigan?

I come from a family of educators, but new entry into the profession has declined to nearly half over the past several decades. Since 2000, Michigan teachers have taken the fifth-largest pay cut in the country. Since 2010, salaries have fallen every year, and their defined-benefit pensions have been cut at various turns, transitioning towards more volatile 401(k) plans. Teacher evaluations, which impart more work and stress into the lives of educators, have grown more arduous, while salaries have not kept pace. Teaching should be held in high regard in our state and should be paid accordingly, it is past time that teachers are paid and treated like the professionals they are.

Fulfilling our state and our children's potential means making the lives of individual teachers better. That is why I am committed to investing \$150 million in teachers: \$75 million to raise salaries and \$75 million to initiatives that promote teacher seniority and teacher leadership in schools. We will fund the creation of professional development programs designed and led by teachers. We will decentralize curricular development, putting teachers back in charge of their classrooms. At the district level, it means incorporating teachers into decisions about how to best assess students and teachers.

I'm also committed to restoring retirement benefits, reducing health insurance costs, and protecting the right of teachers' unions to collectively bargain. It is also important to protect teachers from violence and overwork. We will do that by providing districts with the means to hire the specialized support staff they need -- bus drivers, librarians, counselors, and substitutes. We can pay for this by legalizing and taxing the sale of marijuana and repurposing existing federal grants (Every Student Succeeds Act funds) to focus on dignifying our teachers and our children.

How would you address the achievement gaps between groups of students based on race and socioeconomic status?

A student's zip code, race or class should not predetermine his or her potential in life. As Health Director, I personally inspected Detroit schools and saw the horrendous environments in which children were trying to learn. It's a big reason why we built a program to provide every child with a free pair of glasses if they needed one, and had schools tested for lead. Inequality in educational achievement is a complex issue that stems from multiple, interlocking factors both at home and in the classroom.

Unregulated proliferation of for-profit charter schools have undermined local public school districts in low-income communities. We must end the profit motive that has driven corporate operators to profiteer off our children. We must create a single, unified system of charter school authorization that limits the extent to which new charter schools can proliferate without local oversight. We must end the practice of emergency management for low-income school districts, insisting upon local control with state support. We must also end the system by which we punish "underperforming" schools by shutting them down when they fail to pass standardized tests that we know are a more accurate measure of poverty than educational achievement. The answer to poor student performance has never and will never be to shut down their school, instead we need to reevaluate our student testing system so that it is an accurate picture of actual educational achievement, not a test of means.

Second, we must make sure that school funding is equitable by closing the proposal A per pupil per year gap in allocations between the minimum and basic provision. We have to invest in reducing the teacher/student ratio in low-income districts, given that students in these communities often need more attention - not less. We must also ensure that funding for school infrastructure and school programs is provided based on the needs of students and their teachers, not on their community's capacity to pay. We aim to do this through the Michigan School

Facilities Bank by which we can leverage unused properties to invest in properties that need updating and maintenance.

Third, we must ensure that we are providing wrap-around services to those students that need them most to succeed in the classroom. These include counseling services and regular access to social workers; basic healthcare screening and support - such as eyeglasses; and healthy school meals. We must also invest in educational support professionals, such as librarians, who can engage and support students and teachers. Further, given the distinct overlap between race and class in educational achievement, I would also push to invest in training for restorative justice and culturally-responsive approaches to discipline.

Community College & University Education

What would you do to make public college and university education affordable?

Higher education is one of Michigan's most important engines of mobility. But right now, it does not create quality opportunities for young people who are not headed to a four-year college, and it is too expensive for those who are. I will fight to build a higher education system that supports both college and vocational education. That starts with improving support for Michigan's 28 community colleges and 15 public colleges and universities. It means reducing college debt through innovative funding programs.

I will work to implement a state grant -- similar to California's Cal Grant -- that will ensure that every student whose family makes less than \$100K a year can attend Michigan's public colleges and universities for free, with heavy support for students from wealthier families as well. This grant will be available to students pursuing any type of postsecondary education, including apprenticeships and certificate programs in skilled trades. When combined with greater college and career readiness in schools, this grant will help to ensure that every child in Michigan can afford to attend and succeed in higher education.

How would you address the discrepancies in compensation and job security between tenure-track and non-tenure track faculty at colleges and universities?

As a former faculty member at Columbia University, I understand the unique challenges facing higher education today. One of the most important has been the emergency of a multi-tiered faculty, with a permanent class of underpaid, overworked lecturers and graduate student instructors. As a faculty member, I publicly supported the right for graduate student employees to unionize and collectively bargain for more equal treatment and better pay during my time at Columbia. When members of the Eastern Michigan University Federation of Teachers were negotiating for better working conditions and wage increases for lecturers, I joined their picket

line and showed my support for their efforts. We must support their right to organize, and engage colleges and universities toward compensating their work appropriately.

Unions have made the most gains for non-tenure track faculty, so supporting collective bargaining is the most immediate way to close the gaps in compensation and security between tenure track and non-tenure track faculty. However, as Governor, I would also work with the boards of Michigan's public colleges and universities to establish hiring and compensation guidelines that require:

1. Fractional appointments that include paying non-tenure track faculty proportionally to tenure track faculty; making these non-tenure track faculty eligible for full benefits; and providing proportional opportunities for service and professional development;
2. Multiyear (or multi-semester) contracts, with some compensation for classes cancelled within one week of the start date;
3. Prohibit last minute hiring of contingent faculty, except in emergency circumstances;
4. Encourage the discontinuance of further non-tenure track faculty, except in circumstances where such hires are genuinely needed for special, time-limited appointments

Most importantly, I would support the conversion of contingent appointments to appointments eligible for tenure. This, of course, would require reforms to the tenure system to provide tenure on the basis of teaching achievement in addition to scholarship. Given that non-tenure track faculty constitute a substantial proportion of Michigan's postsecondary faculty, it is imperative that we provide not only better job security and wages, but increased opportunities for career advancement as well.

How would you reverse the erosion of tenure-track faculty positions?

The increase in contingent faculty at universities is part of a larger economic trend towards precarious, contract-based work. This, on the whole, is quite dangerous; student education depends on stability and reliable access to faculty, and the ability to attract and retain high-quality instructors depends on the ability to ensure academic freedom and opportunities for career advancement. Reforming the tenure system to make tenure more accessible -- especially for contingent staff -- is the best way to not only prevent further erosion of tenure-track faculty, but to strengthen and stabilize Michigan's colleges and universities.

I support the conversion of contingent appointments to full-time appointments eligible for tenure, with little modification to current job descriptions. However, given that many teaching-intensive appointments are currently shunted out of the tenure system, this will require significant changes to current tenure expectations. These include:

1. Revising criteria for tenure to make it possible for non-tenure track faculty -- many of whom are hired exclusively to teach -- to become tenured or tenure-eligible based solely on merit in teaching;
2. Extending non-tenure track faculty opportunities to participate in faculty governance and other service opportunities (which is often criteria for tenure);
3. Making requirements for tenure transparent, explicit, and proportional for non-tenure track faculty;
4. Allowing non-tenure track faculty to participate in the evaluation of other non-tenure track faculty. (Student evaluations are often the only form of evaluation for many non-tenure track faculty. Creating a separate, peer evaluation process could increase academic freedom and provide needed support to faculty hoping to gain tenure.)

As governor, I would encourage these changes and support universities that seek to reform their tenure systems to provide more opportunity for non-tenure track faculty. Perhaps more importantly, I will actively support unions that push for such changes. Non-tenure track faculty unions are incredibly important in maintaining equality between both tracks, and I would seek to strengthen these unions specifically.

How would you address the expansion of online education in higher education?

In a time where the number of non-traditional students is increasing, having access to different modalities of instruction -- including online instruction -- is crucial to ensuring that *all* students can receive the education they deserve. However, given the high rates of attrition and failure associated with online-only education, it is clear that unchecked expansion of online colleges and courses is dangerous. Further, there are aspects of classroom educational experiences that cannot be replicated online - such as teaching soft skills, engaging classmates as readily, and building meaningful networks.

In light of the likely rollback of the Obama Administration's gainful employment regulations, it is more crucial than ever for state governments to protect vulnerable populations from online colleges looking to exploit them for profit. As governor, I would work with the Attorney General and the State Legislature to increase oversight on for-profit educators operating in Michigan, with the intention of enforcing gainful employment regulations -- at least the aspects that can readily be tracked -- even in the absence of federal action. Additionally, I would work to pass legislation that requires online classes be paired with some level of in-person instruction and/or academic advising/coaching, as studies have found that this combination increases retention and academic success for students.