



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: Shri Thanedar

Party Affiliation: Democrat

Website: <http://www.shri2018.com>

Candidate Signature:  Date: December 12, 2017

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

In 1979, I immigrated to the United States in to pursue my Ph.D. in polymer chemistry at the University of Akron. After earning my Ph.D. in 1982, I worked as a post-doctoral scholar at the University of Michigan until 1984. For the past twenty-five years, I have started several small service businesses and created hundreds of good-paying jobs along the way.

I am proud to have been recognized by Ernst & Young as Entrepreneur of the Year in 1999, 2007 and in 2016, and have been featured in numerous newspaper and magazine articles. I also wrote a best-selling book, "The Blue Suitcase: Tragedy and Triumph in an Immigrant's Life."

PreK-12, COMMUNITY COLLEGE, AND UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> 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?

Our state's revenue system is the underlying reason why our schools have continual funding challenges. As governor, one way I would look to create tax fairness would be by moving to a graduated state income tax system. By demanding that corporations and the wealthy pay their fair share, I believe we can begin to implement some desperately needed reforms and ensure we have the funding we need to make the necessary investments in our education system.

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

Education funding must be the same for all schools. Every student and teacher must be provided the same access to tools, materials and technology regardless of their district or zip code. For schools in Detroit to receive a different amount in per-pupil funding than Grosse Pointe or Bloomfield Hills or elsewhere is incomprehensible and unacceptable. As governor, I will assure that per-pupil funding is distributed in an equitable fashion by eliminating policies that create competitions for resources.

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

A coherent, cohesive and stable education system is the foundation to student success. We must bring all stakeholders to the table in order to do this. Policy, funding and legislation must all align. By bringing all stakeholders to the table, we can ensure synergy between all stakeholders and a stronger, more comprehensive education system. As an entrepreneur, I understand that businesses invest in communities where people have the education and skills they need be successful. We can attract more businesses, create more jobs and thrive when we invest in our public education system.

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?

I would start by expanding the protections in the Elliott-Larsen Act to ensure that all students, faculty and staff are protected from any form of discrimination and harassment. As an immigrant, I understand how important it is that we create safe learning environments that are free of intolerance. As governor, I would fight to ensure every Michigander is protected against hate-filled rhetoric and look to provide counseling and other support services to assist any victims that are subject to these hateful acts.

PreK-12 EDUCATION

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	Would you provide necessary funding to expand access to quality early childhood education programs?
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	Would you support mandatory full-day kindergarten for all students in Michigan?
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	Would you actively oppose all private school voucher proposals and other plans intended to divert taxpayer dollars from public schools to private schools?
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> 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?
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	Would you support policies to reduce the amount of standardized testing required for Michigan students?
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	Would you support policies to fully involve paraprofessionals in the development of students' Individualized Education Plans?
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	Would you restore the right of school support staff to bargain over privatization of school services?
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> 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?

First, I would look to bring equity into education funding. When funding is not equitable, the competition for quality educators increases and begets a vicious cycle of educator turnover and volatility. As a result, students and academic achievement rates suffer. We also have to make it more desirable to become a teacher, and to me, that means letting teachers teach and reducing government meddling in the classroom. Right-to-work legislation should be repealed and teachers' pensions should be restored and remain untouched. In addition, we must pay teachers like the professionals they are. Some teachers have not seen a pay raise in over a decade, and that's unacceptable. It's time we start showing teachers the respect they deserve which starts by reforming education funding and protecting teacher pensions.

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

A large part of this has to do with equitable funding. Funding should not be decided on zip code. Each student at every school should have the same access to tools, materials, services and educational opportunities.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> 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?
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	Would you appoint people who support workers, and our freedom to join together in unions, to college and university boards?
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	Would you protect academic freedom from partisan attacks?
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> 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?

The cost of public college and university education is staggering. The amount of debt our students accrue over the course of their education is unacceptable, counterproductive and the antithesis of our education system. Education was the ladder I climbed to bring my family out of poverty, and I believe that ladder is broken for too many people. As governor, I would make four-year college free for families whose annual income falls below \$120,000. I would create incentives so that any student who stays in state after graduation would be eligible to have portions of the student debt forgiven. Further, I would explore additional incentives for students that remain in state after graduation and start a business and create jobs that would further eliminate their student loan debt.

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

All educators deserve fair pay and security in their profession. Temporary contracts are unacceptable. For an educator to worry about whether or not they will be retained, rather than focusing on providing as effective a learning experience as possible for students, to me seems incredibly counterproductive. Higher education faculty need to be focused without distraction on their students and courses. They should have a clear understanding for upward mobility not be distracted by concerns over whether or not a temporary contract will be renewed.

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

I believe that much of this erosion is a function of poor budgeting and fiscal management. Schools are neglecting to offer tenure-track positions, many times, out of perceived budgetary necessity and a genuine concern about funding. As governor, I will make sure that our schools are properly funded by implementing a series of progressive tax reforms. Once we provide schools with funding certainty, they can offer proper benefits, tenure-track opportunities and provide the best environment possible for student and teacher success.

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

As a scientist, I think it is important to embrace technology, but, at the same time, we need to remember that technology often works best in concert and not alone. Teachers should have peace of mind that their classrooms will not be replaced with an online-based curriculum nor should they have to worry that they are going to lose control of their curriculum and how they choose to present and deliver that curriculum. Online education is a great alternative for many people, but it should not usurp classroom learning or replace any teacher.

LABOR RIGHTS

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	Would you champion efforts to repeal existing "right-to-work" laws?
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> 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?
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> 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?
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> 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?
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	Would you oppose legislation to further erode the collective bargaining rights of public sector employees?

JOBS AND THE ECONOMY

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	Would you support raising the state's minimum wage to \$15 an hour?
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	Would you oppose state budget cuts that weaken the state's social safety net?
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> 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?
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	Would you support paid sick day legislation?
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	Would you support creating a progressive income tax structure?
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	Do you support prevailing wage for construction work?
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	How would you work to end pay discrimination against women and people of color?

GOOD GOVERNMENT

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	Would you support efforts to promote greater voter participation, including early and no reason absentee voting?
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> 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?