

No layoffs! No budget cuts! Mobilize the working class to defend public education in Ann Arbor and across Michigan!

Michigan Educators Rank-and-File Committee
17 April 2024

Educators, parents and students are livid over the plans of the Ann Arbor Public Schools district to lay off educators and other critical staff to address a \$25 million budget shortfall.

Similar and in some cases even more draconian cuts are being imposed on public schools across the US, as the Biden administration and the Democrats and Republicans join hands to allow the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER) to expire.

Craig Thiel, research director for the Michigan Citizens Research Council (CRC), warned in a recent report that some 5,100 teachers statewide will likely be laid off. “The vast majority of school districts are going to see their budgets decline from a revenue standpoint, with the loss of these one-time federal dollars,” he said.

Ann Arbor educators and community members are not alone

These cuts stretch from the Tahquamenon schools in the Upper Peninsula to Grand Rapids (which plans to close 10 schools) in Michigan, to Jacksonville, Florida, where the Duval County Public Schools district plans to close nearly 30 schools.

Boston, Massachusetts, one of the best funded districts in the country, will cut spending by \$114 million next year, reducing staff in two-thirds of the district’s 119 schools. The cuts will impact music, art, counseling and many other educational programs.

Educators, parents and students want to fight to defend the schools and establish high-quality public education for all

Here is just a sample of the ongoing struggles:

- Over 100 students walked out of schools in Seneca, New York, last week to oppose layoffs and cuts. Students carried handmade signs in support of their educators, with slogans such as, “You can’t put students first if you put teachers last.”

- Flint teachers staged a one-day sickout on March 13, shutting down the district to oppose its refusal to honor its agreement on wages. This follows a decade of wage freezes and poverty pay.

- Hundreds of teachers in Madison, Wisconsin, rallied this past Monday to oppose years of cuts and contract concessions.

The National Education Association (NEA) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) have refused to conduct any serious fight against the decimation of jobs and programs. They have not lifted a finger to unite educators, staff, students and parents within and across school districts in Michigan and throughout the country.

The main concern of the union bureaucrats is to cover for the Democrats and Biden and keep their “seat at the table” by suppressing strikes and demobilizing school workers. Both the Michigan Education Association

(MEA) and the Michigan Federation of Teachers (MFT) have for decades left teachers isolated, district by district, while education was shredded. Tied hand and foot to the Democratic Party, the teachers' unions—committed to Biden's reelection—will not interfere with the administration's prioritization of war over social spending.

The situation is no better in Republican-controlled states and districts. Both parties are controlled by the corporations and banks and do their bidding.

The claim that “there is no money” is a lie.

In Michigan, where the Democrats fully control the state government, corporate handouts—particularly to the automakers—amount to billions. Some \$225 million annually is baked into the state budget through the “Make It In Michigan” initiative, supplemented by other grant programs, including the Critical Industry Program, the R&D tax credit and the Strategic Site Readiness Program. GM alone will net about \$2.28 billion in tax savings through 2029, while Ford received \$630 million for its Blue Oval Battery Park.

A far-reaching bipartisan restructuring of federal government spending is underway, prioritizing war and slashing social spending. The most recent US budget appropriated a record \$886.3 billion for the military, amounting to more than half of the government's entire discretionary funding. The bipartisan budget signed last month by Biden includes his demand for a \$500 million cut in the Department of Education budget.

There is a division of labor between the Democratic and Republican parties, both of which answer to Wall Street. Trump advocates a fascist crackdown on migrants and on the democratic rights of the working class as a whole, while Biden seeks to win Republican support for the war against Russia over Ukraine by backing the war on immigrants at home and propping up Republican House Speaker Mike Johnson, a diehard opponent of abortion rights.

Meanwhile, a steady stream of billions in weapons and bombs is going to support the Israeli Zionist government's genocide in Gaza and prepare for war against Iran and China.

The defense of education requires uniting the working class in an industrial and political struggle

against both parties of austerity and war.

We urge Ann Arbor educators, parents and students to join the Michigan Educators Rank-and-File Committee (MERFC) to take up this fight. The MERFC is affiliated with the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC), which unites workers in the United States and around the world to overthrow the pro-corporate union bureaucracy and mount a counter-offensive against capitalist austerity and war on the basis of a socialist program.



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