

Senator Sean McCann Discusses Michigan's Future

Earlier this week, I had the opportunity to meet virtually with Michigan Senator Sean McCann. It was clear how excited he was to be talking with fellow Broncos. He logged onto our class virtual meeting with a smile and said, "Let's give a shoutout to the Broncos – go Western!"

McCann, who represents Kalamazoo and parts of Portage, currently chairs the Senate Energy and Environment Committee and serves as vice chair of the Appropriations Committee. During the meeting, he spoke about Michigan's biggest challenges – including climate change, education funding, and keeping young people in the state.

When asked about environmental priorities, McCann said addressing climate change and protecting the Great Lakes are at the top of his list. He mentioned recent clean energy legislation setting carbon reduction goals, and emphasized how vital the lakes are to residents and the state's economy.

On education, McCann acknowledged how rising tuition has affected students. He explained that as state funding for universities has decreased over time, tuition has gone up – something that he's been working to change. He highlighted the Michigan Achievement Scholarship, which helps cover more college costs for students. "When state support goes down, tuition goes up," he said. "We're trying to make sure students like you can go to college with less out-of-pocket cost."

McCann also touched on the impact of the federal government shutdown and how it could affect food assistance programs. He said Michigan might struggle to fund SNAP (food assistance) benefits if federal aid stops. "It would cost the state roughly \$260 million to fund a single month of SNAP benefits," he said, noting that Michigan likely couldn't cover that on its own.

Another major focus was economic growth and keeping graduates in Michigan. McCann pointed to projects like Ford's BlueOval Battery Plant in Marshall as examples of the state investing in new industries and better-paying jobs. "We want Michigan to be a place people want to live and work," he said.

Before wrapping up, McCann reflected on his career in public service – from the Kalamazoo City Commission to the Michigan Senate. He mentioned his work on redistricting reform and environmental protection but ended on a lighter note, "I passed the law allowing adults to have beer at college sporting events," he said.

Hearing from McCann gave me a clearer sense of how state politics connect to everyday life – from tuition costs to environmental policy. It was encouraging to see how connected he still feels to WMU and how committed he is to improving Michigan for students like us.