Trying to Buy the Election
Peter Meijer was born with a silver spoon in his mouth, and now he’s trying to use it to buy a seat in Congress. His family is the 31st richest family in America — worth $7.9 billion as of 2015.¹ He already has loaned his own campaign some $425,000 — just in the primary election²— and has relied on donations from his rich family members and other billionaire families like the DeVos’s.³ Meijer has even been called out by fellow Republicans, with Tom Norton, a fellow candidate, saying that Meijer was getting the big donors because they “don’t want to offend the Meijer family. They’re scared of the money,”⁴ and was criticized for trying to buy the election.⁵ And Meijer has made no secret about his willingness to use his obscene wealth to buy himself a seat in Congress — in an interview shortly after launching his campaign in July 2019, asked if he was “planning to mostly self-fund” his campaign, he responded, “I’m going to do what I need to do.”⁶

Michiganders should elect candidates with grassroots support who represent their values and their voices, not billionaire heirs who think they can buy their way into power. Peter Meijer is precisely what’s wrong with our broken political system and economic system — with the rich getting richer, and more powerful, while the rest of us struggle to get by.

Out of Touch with Working Michiganders
Peter Meijer is the absolute epitome of a rich, out-of-touch politician who has no clue what it means to put bread on the table and take care of one’s family. Meijer’s family is the 31st richest in America — worth some $7.9 billion as of 2015.⁷ And while Meijer is still just 32-years-old, his financial disclosures show that, because he was born with a silver spoon, he’d already be one of the very richest members of Congress — and possibly the single richest member. According to the disclosures, Meijer’s net worth as of 2020 was, at a minimum, over $55 million — and because he’s the beneficiary of a trust fund whose value was simply stated as “Over $50 million” his net worth could be many orders of magnitude greater than that amount.

While Meijer and his wife reported just over $100,000 in total earned income in 2018 and 2019 — a relatively modest amount, by there standards, that would still put them in the 72nd percentile in the state — they also reported unearned income (or asset-based income) of between $292,000 and $1.8 million, amounts that would easily put the blessed young couple in the top 1 percent in the state —

¹ “2015 America’s Richest Families Net Worth,” Forbes 7/1/2015
² “GOP House candidate delivers groceries during pandemic,” Roll Call, 5/18/2020
³ “GOP House candidate delivers groceries during pandemic,” Roll Call, 5/18/2020
⁴ “Big name recognition pays off in pandemic; Virus cuts down campaign fundraising opportunities,” Todd Spangler, Detroit Free Press, 6/17/2020
⁵ “In race for Amash’s seat, big names have an edge; Meijer, Afendoulis garner support in west Michigan,” Todd Spangler, Detroit Free Press, 7/23/2020
⁶ “Meijer: People are ‘frustrated’ with Amash, want ‘someone new’.” Michigan Advance, 7/11/2019
and that’s without working or even lifting a finger. The fact that Meijer, at 32, could make more in a single year simply from the assets he has inherited from his billionaire family than many Michigan families earn in a lifetime tells you all you need to know about just how out of touch he is with normal, working Michiganders.

What’s more, Meijer only recently moved back to Michigan after years of living in New York City, buying two swanky Manhattan apartments and selling them for $1.45 million in 2018. What could someone like Peter Meijer have in common with a hardworking family from West Michigan? We deserve someone that we can trust to represent our interests in Congress – not another mouthpiece for the elite.

**Meijer Family Can’t Be Trusted**

When Peter Meijer’s family business couldn’t have things their way, they illegally spent over $100,000 to influence election outcomes, and we can’t trust Meijer not to follow in his family’s footsteps.

After a referendum calling for a development of big box stores was placed on the ballot in Acme Township, Meijer, Inc. filed a lawsuit alleging the language in the moratorium was prejudicial. The company also filed a $1 million lawsuit that the Acme Township Supervisor called frivolous and an attempt to “terrorize” the township.

A few years later, after members of the Acme Township Board survived a recall attempt over their alleged stall tactics preventing the construction of a Meijer store, Meijer, Inc. acknowledged funding the failed recall effort. The company had paid a PR firm at least $30K to mount the recall campaign, but the contributions were not reported to the state. Then, the Michigan Secretary of State fined Meijer, Inc. a record $190K for violating the state’s Campaign Finance Act, penalizing Meijer, Inc. for spending more than $100K to influence the outcomes of the referendum and the recall vote.

When Meijer, Inc. couldn’t get what it wanted from Acme Township, it turned to illegal tactics to try and influence both a referendum and a recall vote. We need representatives in Congress who understand the danger of the influence of special interests, not Peter Meijer, whose family business tried to use its corporate might and limitless resources to bully public officials and get its way.

**Won’t Advocate for Workers**

Here in Michigan, our workers are the backbone of our economy, and we need representatives in Congress who will unabashedly advocate for workers’ rights. Peter Meijer’s family business tactics, however, have shown that he will not fight for Michigan workers in Washington. Last year, the EEOC

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8 New York City Department of Finance, Office of the City Register
9 "Why Acme Township Meijer took 16 years to open," Shandra Martinez, MLive.com, Posted 11/6/2015, Updated 5/21/2019
10 "Why Acme Township Meijer took 16 years to open," Shandra Martinez, MLive.com, Posted 11/6/2015, Updated 5/21/2019
11 "Why Acme Township Meijer took 16 years to open," Shandra Martinez, MLive.com, Posted 11/6/2015, Updated 5/21/2019
12 "Why Acme Township Meijer took 16 years to open," Shandra Martinez, MLive.com, Posted 11/6/2015, Updated 5/21/2019
13 "Why Acme Township Meijer took 16 years to open," Shandra Martinez, MLive.com, Posted 11/6/2015, Updated 5/21/2019
14 "Why Acme Township Meijer took 16 years to open," Shandra Martinez, MLive.com, Posted 11/6/2015, Updated 5/21/2019
filed a lawsuit against Meijer Inc. alleging the company violated the Americans with Disabilities Act over its treatment of an employee in Oakland County.\textsuperscript{15}

The EEOC also sued Meijer, Inc. on behalf of an employee who refused to work on Sunday, and an EEOC attorney said the company had to make changes after having “inadequate” procedures to assist employees whose religious beliefs clashed with their work schedules.

What’s more, in both 2006\textsuperscript{16} and 2008,\textsuperscript{17} Meijer, Inc. received a zero percent rating on the Human Rights Campaign’s Corporate Equality Index report, which is released annually and provides analysis and rating of large U.S. employers and their policies and practices related to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer employees.\textsuperscript{18}

Advocating for Michigan workers is non-negotiable when it comes to our members of Congress, and Peter Meijer isn’t up to the task.

Political Expediency

Peter Meijer is just another under-qualified and over-privileged political neophyte running for Congress not because of his beliefs, but because of his ego. In 2016, Meijer was decidedly anti-Trump, and he’s been criticized by Republicans as a candidate for his former “Never-Trump” record, including some of his published writings criticizing the White House and donations specifically to Never-Trump organizations such as the veterans groups Common Defense and Beyond the Choir Action Fund. (He also gave $1,000 to liberal comedian Stephen Colbert’s satirical super PAC, Americans for a Better Tomorrow, Tomorrow, in 2011.)

But Meijer is a nothing if not a political opportunist—which is why, on the campaign trail, he sounds as supportive of Donald Trump as the president’s closest allies and confidantes, unwilling to criticism him on anything, from his failures to contain the coronavirus, to his failed trade policies that have cost Michiganders billions, to his attempts to rip health care away from millions. Meijer once asked, rhetorically, “How can a conservative look at [President Trump] … and not get excited?”

The fact is, Meijer appears only to be excited about President Trump because he thinks he needs to be to get elected to Congress in West Michigan. But Michiganders know better than to elect someone whose opinions change with the political winds—we can do better.

Covid-19

With Michigan, the nation, and the world continuing to fight the coronavirus pandemic, we need steady, responsible leadership, not partisan pandering, now more than ever. But Peter Meijer has shown all he cares about is getting elected. Meijer has been endorsed by and received tens of

\textsuperscript{15} “EEOC sues Meijer over alleged ADA violations,” Joe Boomgaard, MiBiz, 8/11/2019
\textsuperscript{16} HRC Corporate Equality Index 2006
\textsuperscript{17} HRC Corporate Equality Index 2008
\textsuperscript{18} Corporate Equality Index Archive, Human Rights Campaign, Accessed 7/31/2020
thousands of dollars from Betsy DeVos and members of the DeVos family—the same family whose allies actually helped plan stay-at-home protests in Michigan, which involved armed individuals not only gathering, unmasked, in large groups at the height of the pandemic in Michigan, but also entering the State Capitol armed with firearms.

While Meijer had no criticism for those irresponsible, even dangerous actions, he has called Gov. Gretchen Whitmer’s response to the pandemic “arbitrary,” and he specifically called for decisions around the distribution and implementation of a potential coronavirus vaccine to be made at the local, state level. And Meijer has even pointed to efforts to allow all Michiganders to vote safely in the midst of this global health crisis as an opportunity for fraud, saying that by mailing absentee ballots to all voters, “We really open the door for some fraud to arise.”

Michiganders deserve a leader who is focused on defeating this virus—not one who seeks to use the crisis to score political points and defeat his opponents.

Too Conservative
Peter Meijer is simply too conservative and too right-wing for West Michigan. Whether it’s a woman’s right to choose, access to health care, union rights, gun safety reform, education or energy, Meijer has shown that he’s out of step with Michigan voters and can’t be trusted to represent their interests in Congress.

On issue after issue, Meijer has staked the position as far to the right as he possibly could:

- **Abortion:** He has said repeatedly that he is “100% pro-life”—a stance that often means opposing abortion even in cases of incest or rape, or when the mother’s life is in danger.
- **Guns:** Despite being “100% pro-life,” he has steadfastly opposed reasonable gun safety reforms—including Red Flag laws, which allow for the temporary removal of firearms from individuals deemed to be an immediate danger to themselves or others, such as spouses or children.
- **Immigration:** On immigration, Meijer has supported some of the extreme measures taken by President Trump, including the expulsion of thousands of immigrants to Mexico, and the shutting down of the nation’s asylum system.
- **Health Care:** On health care, Meijer has claimed to support protections for those with pre-existing conditions, but has opposed the Affordable Care Act—which provided just those protections—and failed to stand up to Trump’s lawsuit attacking the ACA.
- **Unions and Minimum Wage:** On unions, Meijer supports right-to-work laws, despite the devastating effects they can have on union membership and wages. (On wages, Meijer has been critical of increases in the federal minimum wage, calling one such proposal an “onerous federal regulation.”)
- **LGBT and Education:** Meijer also has been criticized for having an anti-LGBT stance—cancelling a drag performance by individuals with Down syndrome in a venue he owned—and has closely allied himself with Betsy DeVos, whose education policies consist of little more than defunding public schools and supporting private and religious institutions.

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19 “COVID Vaccine | WOOD TV Debate.” Peter Meijer for Congress, YouTube, 7/15/2020
20 “Voting in 2020 | WOOD TV Debate.” Peter Meijer for Congress, YouTube, 7/15/2020
What’s more, Meijer’s myriad investments show that he puts his money where his true values lie. Meijer is invested in companies that harm our health (Philip Morris, the tobacco giant); profit from our failed health care system (Anthem, Cigna, and others); helped create the Great Recession before profiting from the aftermath (the financial giant BlackRock, Charles Schwab, and others); destroy our environment (Rio Tinto, a mining company; Chevron, Exxon Mobil, Marathon Oil, and others); and kill our brothers and sisters because of the opioid pandemic (Amgen, Bristol-Myers, Merck, Pfizer and others).

Between the far rightwing stances he’s taken as a candidate and the values he’s shown with his financial investments, Meijer has made clear to all what kind of representative he’d be in Congress—one who would put corporations, the wealthy, and rightwing extremists first, not average, hard-working Americans.

Supports Tariffs that Hurt Michiganders
Donald Trump’s trade tariffs are hurting the United States and Michigan—even conservative groups like the Heritage Foundation agree. Tariffs are known to make goods more expensive, increase uncertainty, and, ultimately, cause retaliation and often lead to trade wars that hurt businesses and consumers alike. Michigan taxpayers have paid $1.6 billion so far in additional tariffs that were placed on imported products like soybeans, pork and wheat, and paid $589 million in retaliatory tariffs.

But Peter Meijer doesn’t care. He proudly supported the tariffs that were causing Michigan so much pain, and “devastating” the state’s farmers. And as the trade deal with China promised by Trump looks to be dead, there’s no end in sight for hardworking Michiganders. We can’t afford Peter Meijer in Congress—just another Trump rubberstamp that puts politics first and refuses to fight for Michigan workers, Michigan farmers, and Michigan business owners.

Anti-LGBTQ+
The last thing Michigan needs is a bigot representing us. But Peter Meijer, despite having never held public office, has already stirred up controversy with his anti-LGBTQ views and actions. In 2019, Meijer banned “Drag Syndrome”—an internationally recognized troupe of performers who have Down syndrome and perform in drag—from performing at his venue.

Meijer claimed that the cancellation was due to the potential exploitation of the performers, but the group hosting the show, DisArt, noted that the performers had “long-standing, successful, internationally acclaimed careers,” and had won awards from Queen Elizabeth II and Cannes Film

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21 “The proof is in: Tariffs are hurting the US,” Tori K. Smith, The Heritage Foundation, 8/27/2019
22 “The proof is in: Tariffs are hurting the US,” Tori K. Smith, The Heritage Foundation, 8/27/2019
25 “In race for Amash’s seat, big names have an edge; Meijer, Afendoulis garner support in west Michigan,” Todd Spangler, Detroit Free Press, 7/23/2020
26 “Michigan farmers brace for new Chinese tariffs as trade war rolls on,” Malachi Barrett, MLive, 8/28/2019
27 “The trade deal may be dead, Trump says China relationship ‘severely damaged,’” Sergei Klebnikov, Forbes, 7/10/2020
28 “‘Drag Syndrome’ not allowed to perform at Tanglefoot,” Fox 17, 8/22/2019
Festival. An ACLU lawyer said, “Mr. Meijer seems to be troubled by this performance ... I don’t know he would’ve cancelled it if the performers with Down Syndrome had been playing the violin. It might not have been a concern to him. Meijer appears to be motivated by his objections to performing in drag which raises issues of gender stereotyping.”

Meijer’s decision and characterization of those with Down syndrome as lacking agency was rebuked by a Down syndrome behavioral expert who said, “adults with Down syndrome were typically mature enough to make their own decisions. Anyone who knows people with Down syndrome understands that they love to perform and they’re really good at it. They’re so open hearted and they love music and dancing and theater.”

While Meijer complained that he was being targeted for being a conservative, Drag Syndrome performers criticized and defied him. One said, “This is my life, this is my journey, and I’m very proud of it ... I’m going to carry on acting whether you like it or not.” Another said, “There’s no way I’m letting you treat us that way. We deserve to perform, we deserve to be who we are, and live our lives as we are ... It doesn’t matter if we are disabled, or [from a] different country, that’s what we have got to do and that’s what we are here to do.”

Instead of apologizing and attempting to better understand the issue, Meijer doubled down. On Facebook, he shared a post from “the anti-LGBTQ group,” called “Christian Constitutional Conservatives Who Stand for Life and Liberty,” which referred to the performance pushing “an LGBT agenda.” It’s likely that Peter Meijer came to his intolerant views honestly, because his family’s company, Meijer Inc., received a zero percent rating on the Human Rights Campaign’s Corporate Equality Index report, which provides analysis and ratings of large U.S. employers and their policies related to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer employees.

West Michiganders know better, and they deserve a representative in Congress who believes in equality and who will defend the rights and interests of all Michiganders, in Congress.

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29 “‘Drag Syndrome’ not allowed to perform at Tanglefoot.” Fox 17, 8/22/2019
30 “DisArt, ACLU to ask for civil rights investigation after drag show cancellation.” Fox 17, 9/3/2019
31 “Complaint filed after door closes on drag performers with down syndrome,” Julia Jacobs, New York Times, 9/5/2019
32 “Peter Meijer Bars Drag Syndrome from Tanglefoot Site: Discrimination or Protection?” PrideSource.com, 9/11/2019
33 “Artists criticize Peter Meijer for banning drag show featuring Down syndrome performers.” MLive.com, 8/2/2019
34 “Michigan ACLU files complaint after GOP candidate cancels drag show.” NBC News, 9/6/2019
35 “Peter Meijer Bars Drag Syndrome from Tanglefoot Site: Discrimination or Protection?” PrideSource.com, 9/11/2019
36 Corporate Equality Index Archive, Human Rights Campaign, Accessed 7/31/2020