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LANSING, Mich. (WLNS) — Democratic U.S. Senate nominee Abdul El-Sayed released a plan he says would clean up drinking water, put fresher food in school lunches and ban farm chemicals already prohibited in Europe. His campaign said the plan targets "Make America Healthy Again" voters frustrated with President Donald Trump.

"Our food and water are making us sick, and everyone in Washington knows it," the plan says. "So many Americans see that corporate influence pushes the mass production of ultra-processed food and the overuse of pesticides that pollute our water and drive up rates of chronic disease and cancer."

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El-Sayed, a public health researcher who studied how diseases spread, faces former Republican U.S. Rep. Mike Rogers of White Lake Township in the race to replace retiring Democratic Sen. Gary Peters of Bloomfield Township. A **New York Times/Siena poll**, taken Sept. 15-22,

found El-Sayed ahead 49% to 44%, with a margin of error of plus-minus 4.9%. An **Emerson College/6 News** survey found El-Sayed up 2 points, within its margin of error.



Democratic nominee for U.S. Senate Abdul El-Sayed speaks at a news conference at the base of the Spirit of Detroit monument in Detroit, Wednesday, Aug. 19, 2026. (AP Photo/Paul Sancya)

Clean water

The plan calls for removing PFAS, lead and chemical microplastics from Michigan's drinking water and restoring federal limits on PFAS, the man-made "forever chemicals" that don't break down in the body or the

environment. It also promises full lead-pipe replacement for every Michigan community that needs it.

That fight is already happening in Michigan, where the state set its own drinking water limits for seven PFAS compounds in 2020, and those limits have been tied up in a legal challenge from chemical maker 3M. **Bridge Michigan** reported more than 329 PFAS contamination sites in the state.

In May, the EPA **proposed** rolling back federal limits on four PFAS chemicals, including GenX, while keeping limits on two others.

Farms and food

El-Sayed's plan would also ban pesticides already prohibited in Europe. The ban would not reach **glyphosate**, the weedkiller in Roundup central to a split among MAHA voters, because the European Union has not

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New Jersey Democratic Sen. Cory Booker that would let people sue pesticide makers in federal court if their products cause harm. Booker introduced it July 17, 2025, and it has little momentum in the Senate.

The plan also proposes shifting farm subsidies to reward soil health, taking on consolidation in the seed, fertilizer and chemical industries,

and rebuilding U.S. Department of Agriculture conservation staff the plan says were cut by Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency.

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School lunches

The plan calls for building scratch-cooking kitchens in Michigan schools and investing in state programs like Michigan's **10 Cents a Meal**, a state-funded grant that helps schools buy Michigan-grown produce and beans.

The state Legislature cut 10 Cents a Meal from the budget last school year, but restored $4 million in funding for the current school year.

Before the cuts, program supporters said it **reached nearly 600,000 Michigan children**. An MSU researcher testified that $3.5 million in state spending in fiscal year 2025 produced nearly $12 million in economic impact, and when funding stopped, a supplier **estimated** he lost up to 200,000 pounds of demand for Michigan produce.

El-Sayed's plan also cites a 2013-21 study that **estimated** diabetes costs the country roughly $640 billion a year in medical costs — $335 billion in direct costs and $305 billion in indirect costs.

What is MAHA, and why does it matter in this race?

Supporters of "Make America Healthy Again" — the movement tied to U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. — worry about chemicals in food and water, pesticides on crops and rising rates of chronic disease. Many of its best-known voices are mothers, often called "MAHA moms," and its supporters argue their votes helped Trump win in 2024.

Kennedy got his job in part by promising to ban glyphosate and cut back on pesticides. Before joining the administration, Kennedy worked as a lawyer on lawsuits against Monsanto, the company that makes Roundup, over glyphosate.

This year, some MAHA supporters say the administration went the other way after Trump **signed an executive order** to boost glyphosate production. The order said companies that make it should be protected from lawsuits under a Cold War-era defense law. Kennedy **defended** the order. Kelly Ryerson, a MAHA activist who campaigns against glyphosate, told **Reuters** she saw little hope of keeping MAHA voters after the order.

In June, the U.S. Supreme Court **ruled** 7-2 that people who say Roundup gave them cancer can't sue Monsanto in state court for failing to warn them, because the federal government approved the product's label.

The Trump administration's top lawyer at the court sided with Monsanto.

Not every Republican went along. In April, the U.S. House **voted** to remove language from the farm bill that would have protected pesticide makers from similar lawsuits. Florida Republican U.S. Rep. Anna Paulina Luna pushed the change.

MAHA supporters have also objected to changes on drinking water. In May, the EPA **proposed dropping federal limits on "forever chemicals."**

El-Sayed's campaign is betting some of those frustrated voters are up for grabs, and he isn't the only Democrat trying. Booker **urged his party to reach out to MAHA voters**, but the two sides disagree on other issues, including COVID-19 vaccines. Kennedy, a vaccine skeptic with no medical background, has pushed to reduce the number of vaccines recommended for children — a change many public health experts oppose.

"This is a routine healthcare issue," Dr. Natasha Bagdasarian, the state's chief medical executive, told 6 News in a previous **interview**. "I believe that damage that has been done to the CDC and organizations like ACIP, and that damage will last for decades."

Farmers are part of the debate too, with Kennedy saying an outright glyphosate ban would put 80% of farmers out of business. El-Sayed's plan doesn't call for banning glyphosate.

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