

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CPS Special Education Classroom Assistants, Custodians, Bus Aides, and Security Officers Vote with Overwhelming Majority to Authorize Strike

Chicago – After working without a contract for over a year, Special Education Classroom Assistants (SECAs), Custodians, Bus Aides, and Security Officers, represented by SEIU Local 73 voted with an overwhelming majority of ballots cast to authorize a strike. Union members did a final vote count on Saturday July 13 with a final result of 97% voting yes. These workers provide important educational, health, and safety services to students everyday but have been largely ignored by CPS administration. This year they are saying enough is enough and demanding the respect they have earned.

Workers across job titles are standing united in their push for more sustainable working conditions but CPS has not responded in earnest to workers proposals to increase pay, reward longevity, and restore paid benefit time that was taken in previous contracts. Workers are demanding that SECAs receive meaningful professional development and fair compensation so they are not forced to work two and three jobs to make ends meet. Custodians are seeking the removal of Sodexo and Aramark as management companies in order to be more fairly supervised in-house. Bus Aides are paid poverty wages and are demanding improvements to their pay scales and work schedules. Finally, Security Officers are pushing for improvements to training and an increase in staffing to help monitor school doors at all times. Workers are asking for nothing more than the absolute workplace essentials for running sustainable schools for students across CPS but they have stalled and stonewalled long enough.

“I am going to make my voice heard for the sake of those voices that aren’t including my coworkers and my special education students. My students live and learn through their severe handicaps and we just do not have the necessary staff nor resources to make sure all of our students receive the attention they deserve. I’m ready to fight for them.” – Henry Wilborn, Special Education Classroom Assistant II. Gresham Elementary.

“I use to enjoy coming into work but every day I feel more and more stressed. Private companies like Aramark have taken too much control over our work as custodians with no fairness. We don’t have the supplies or machines we need to get our work done right and then us Custodians are blamed for the conditions of the schools. We have to work harder with less and it’s not fair. Enough is enough.” – Sarah Morgan, Lead Custodian, Robert A. Black Magnet School.

“This is personal for me. We have a lot of crime in this city but I’m happy to say that while students are in school, they are safe with me. This means the world to me but unfortunately it doesn’t seem to be that important to CPS. Security Officers need proper staffing and training to keep students safe but when we ask for it we get laughed at. They think it’s a joke but there’s nothing funny about our students safety. I’m ready to strike because my students’ safety is worth it. I know showing our strength will get us the resources we deserve.” – Morris Crawford,

Security Officer, Bouchet International School.

“A change to our working conditions is long overdue. As a Bus Aide with CPS it is a challenge every day for me to get scheduled for enough hours to make ends meet. The cost of living in Chicago keeps going up but I haven’t seen a raise in years to keep up. Workers are losing their cars and homes and what we make is just not enough. It is time for management to take this seriously.” – Gail Pierce, Bus Aide, CPS.

On Wednesday, June 26th, Mayor Lori Lightfoot’s new School Board met for the first time and SEIU Local 73 members stood side by side the Chicago Teachers Union to show that CPS workers across job titles and across the city will not be made invisible. On Wednesday, July 24, CPS workers represented by SEIU Local 73 will be holding a press conference outside of the next School Board meeting to announce our intention to strike if a just agreement is not reached before the new school year.

“CPS workers are tired of the stalling. We have made proposals at the negotiating table that are meant to provide the essential working conditions and resources for our members to do their jobs properly but management is not listening. When Mayor Lightfoot came into office we were hopeful about reaching a fair agreement. It is clear now that we have to send a stronger message and we are prepared to strike come the Fall.” – Science Meles, SEIU Local 73 Executive Vice President.

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SEIU Local 73 represents more than 29,000 workers, primarily in public service and publicly funded positions in school districts, municipalities, social service agencies, and many other job classifications in Illinois and Indiana. We are dedicated to improving the lives of workers and their families.