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CONTACT: Deivid Rojas, deividrojas88@gmail.com, 305-975-8527

Pictures and Videos from Picket Lines Available Here:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1cj8S6DHYLMctr2NFGawS5zAM6nq4M-tA>

“Chronically Underpaid”: Over half of CPS Staff make less than \$35,630

FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HISTORY, MORE THAN 7,500 CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS STAFF STRIKE WITH TEACHERS

Special Education Classroom Assistants, Custodians, Bus Aides, and Security Officers are set to Continue Strike Friday Without Any Progress On A Contract That Offers Good Jobs For School Staff and Ensures the Clean, Safe Schools Chicago’s Students Deserve

CHICAGO-More than 7,500 Chicago Public School staff with SEIU Local 73, including special education classroom assistants, bus aides, custodians, and security officers, from over 500 public schools across Chicago joined teachers on strike Thursday for the first time in history. Public school staff have been working without a contract since June 30th, 2018.

For months, SEIU Local 73 CPS members have bargained in good faith, and have submitted numerous comprehensive contract proposals and counter-proposals that create good jobs in the school’s halls and gives students, especially special education students, the schools they deserve. However, the mayor has refused to offer a contract that properly invests in students and staff.

Public School staff were at hundreds of picket lines across every corner of the city as early at 6 a.m. Workers held signs that read “School staff ON STRIKE for our special education students!” and “SECAs, bus aides, custodians, security officers on strike for: Justice for students. School equity. Dignity.”

Dian Palmer, President of SEIU Local 73, and dozens of workers from Christopher Elementary at 51st and Artesian, a majority special education school, held a press conference in the morning.

“We want to negotiate a fair contract to bring Chicago the schools that children deserve and to win economic justice for all our workers. However, the city’s unwillingness to bring equity and fairness to workers have given us no other choice than to go on strike. We are going to stay on strike as long as it takes to ensure a bright future for Chicago’s students, especially special education students, and fair working conditions for the thousands of staff who work in the halls of our schools,” said Dian Palmer.

“Special Education Classroom Assistants provide an important personal service for special education students. It seems like the city does not understand and respect that. Today we are

sending a message that we are tired of being taken for granted. We are going to show that we mean business. We want more resources put into these schools and we also want to be able to make a decent living within the city of Chicago. We are on strike for because we deserve more and certainly our students deserve more,” said Andre Henry, Special Education Classroom Assistant at Christopher Elementary.

Off-duty Chicago Park District workers who just reached [a historic tentative agreement](#) on October 16 also joined the strike lines to stand in solidarity with their fellow SEIU members.

Mayor Lightfoot publicly stated that Chicago Public School staff with SEIU Local 73 are ‘chronically underpaid.’ Most CPS staff are low-wage workers who live paycheck to paycheck, with many working second or third jobs to make ends meet. Over half of CPS staff make less than \$35,360.

CPS workers are also demanding clean and safe schools and the proper resources for special education students. For that to happen, these issues need to be addressed: SECAs need to stop being pulled into random assignments so their special education students can receive the care and instruction they deserves; CPS needs to end giving millions of dollars to Sodexo and Aramark while custodians are struggling for resources and bus aides are being forced to work multiple jobs in between shifts to make ends meet.

While Mayor Lightfoot and the city have continuously claimed that the district is too cash-strapped to meet the contract demands of Chicago Public School staff, the Chicago Public School board has continued to pour millions into private contractors Sodexo and Aramark for facilities management and custodial services. Since 2014, CPS has given Sodexo \$244,350,538 and Aramark \$443,745,483, despite [multiple reports and audits that have found that these companies are leaving schools dirty](#). The hundreds of millions of dollars spent on these companies can be better spent elsewhere in the schools. Workers propose that custodians are directly supervised by the school board.

The strike is just the latest example of working people of different races and from different places joining together to take action for higher wages and good jobs, taking on employers like GM, Kaiser, Stop and Shop and McDonald’s. Across the nation, workers are demanding that the 2020 presidential candidates have plans to help millions of workers join together in unions to bargain across employers for higher wages, better jobs and a brighter future for our families.

On Wednesday, Presidential candidate [Bernie Sanders](#) tweeted his support for the CPS staff and teachers strike.

CPS staff with SEIU Local 73 are set to continue to strike Friday.

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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. SEIU Local 73 represents 7,500 Chicago Public School staff. For more information please visit the SEIU LOCAL 73 website at www.seiu73.org