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'CPS IT'S TIME FOR A RAISE'

**SEIU LOCAL 73 STRIKE DAY 5:
CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS STAFF HOST BUS TOUR AND TOWN HALL
TO HIGHLIGHT CPS' POVERTY WAGES**

CHICAGO-In the lead up to Mayor Lightfoot's budget address, SEIU Local 73 CPS bus aides and other staff started the fifth day of strikes by hosting a bus tour of tax increment financing locations that highlighted the city's funding priorities. Workers stressed that the city is willing to spend hundreds of millions of dollars on development projects for the very wealthy, but is unwilling to negotiate a fair contract that creates a path out of poverty for staff. Later in the evening, CPS staff with SEIU Local 73 also hosted a 'CPS IT'S TIME FOR A RAISE' townhall at St. Benedict the African Catholic Church that brought together building staff and support workers (known as PSRPs), represented by the CTU, and bus aides and special education classroom assistants, represented by SEIU Local 73, to share their stories about trying to survive on the poverty wages.

"It's ridiculous that Mayor Lightfoot found it easier and has taken less time to approve using \$700 million in tax increment funding for a 62-acre high-end, mega-development than to negotiate a fair contract for Chicago Public School workers," said **SEIU Local 73 President Dian Palmer** as the bus passed The Chicago 78 development. "SEIU Local 73 members are striking not only for good jobs but for the betterment of our communities."

Today's stops on the bus tour included The Chicago 78 and Win Trust Arena, The Chicago 78, a \$7 billion development project was awarded \$700 million in TIF funds and is an example of city-supported economic growth that favors prosperous Chicagoans instead of providing basic infrastructure and safety to those who need it the most. The approximately \$193 million Win Trust Arena project received \$55 million and once again focused on downtown and lakefront development instead of investment in public services, schools, and parks in Chicago's neighborhoods.

Bus aides are the lowest-paid CPS workers, earning an average of only \$15,600 a year, yet instead of investing in public school workers, the city continues to put TIF dollars into million-dollar projects that create economic and racial segregation. Two-thirds of the children of PSRPs qualify for free and reduced-price school lunches under federal poverty guidelines. Over half of CPS support staff make less than \$35,360.

SEIU Local 73 Member Ida Bailey, a school bus aide that serves three separate schools, says her day starts at 4:30am to get to her first bus stop to pick up kids. She gets home at 5pm. Because of her low wages she has to live with other family members to share expenses to make ends meet. "Instead of our

tax dollars going to wealthy developers and corporations, I would like the City to move that money into the school system and invest in our CPS support staff. There is enough money in Chicago to lift people out of poverty.”

Following the bus tour, bus aides joined CTU and SEIU LOCAL 73 members for the march to City Hall to rally outside the Mayor’s budget address. Chicago Public School workers currently in negotiation are asking for a living wage and enough staff to support students while talks around the budget do not address Chicago’s poverty-stricken workers.

The current bargaining sticking points include: pay increases for staff that create a pathway out of poverty pay and make-up raises that were taken away by CPS in the past, improved pay for special education classroom assistants (SECAs) that reflects their work and responsibilities, enforcement of SECAs’ duties and responsibilities so they are not pulled away from their special education students, an end to using Sodexo and Aramark to manage the work of custodians, and addressing the lack of benefits such as paid days during Christmas break.

“I am angry and disappointed that so many CPS support workers have to live in poverty. I have three jobs myself just to make ends meet,” said **SEIU Local 73 Member Yolanda McGrone, a bus aide**. “In addition to my main job I also work doing home care and as a medical assistant. I know there are bus aides who have had to live out of their cars, or live with other families all because of inadequate pay. “

Outside City Hall, **SEIU Executive Vice President Jeff Howard** called on the Mayor Lightfoot at the Grassroots Collaborative rally, “Mayor Lightfoot, you have a choice: do what’s right to move CPS support staff out of poverty so they can support their own families and better support our students or continue to side with developers and the police department.”

7,500 Chicago Public Schools staff have been working without a contract since June 30, 2018.

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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