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*Summary of contract is available upon request

‘Victory for working people in Chicago’

7,500 CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS SUPPORT STAFF WITH SEIU LOCAL 73 WIN ECONOMIC JUSTICE AND BETTER SCHOOLS IN CONTRACT WITH CPS

Workers win significant pay increases and improvements in working conditions, more resources for special education students

CHICAGO - After nearly 17 months of negotiations and a seven-day strike, the members of SEIU Local 73 overwhelmingly voted in favor of a new five-year contract with Chicago Public Schools (CPS) Wednesday, winning substantial pay increases, significant improvements in working conditions, and more resources for students. The new contract is retroactive to July 1, 2018, and expires on June 30, 2023.

SEIU Local 73 represents 7,500 Chicago Public Schools support staff including special education classroom assistants (SECAs), bus aides, custodians, and security officers.

The newly ratified contract is a start in creating a pathway out of poverty for many of the workers that Mayor Lightfoot called ‘chronically underpaid.’ For example, under the current contract, it would take 17 years for a new SECA to reach \$40,000 per year. Under the new contract, beginning in 2023, SECAs can reach \$40,000 in one to two years.

“This is a victory for working people in Chicago and shows what is possible when we unite and take action,” said Dian Palmer, president of SEIU Local 73. “The lowest-paid support workers who are the backbone of our schools are going to see raises that mean their families won't have to struggle as hard living in an expensive city where costs keep going up.”

The contract is also a victory for schools, especially for special education students. For the first time, Special Education Classroom Assistants will have self-directed prep and planning time scheduled throughout the school year. The contract will also support SECAs’ dedication to special education students, protecting them from being used as utility workers and from being used for the general student population rather than their assigned students.

“I am proud of what we have been able to accomplish together for the sake of our families, our students and our schools,” said Jonathan Williams, a special education classroom assistant at Wilma Rudolph Learning Center and a member of the bargaining team. “We want to provide our kids the education they deserve in an environment that is clean and safe. This contract will help us to better serve and advocate for our students and will help us support our families.”

The agreement comes after 97% of support staff voted to authorize a strike in June after working without a contract since June 30, 2018. Tired of the disrespect and seeking a path to a better life for their families and better support for students, members went on strike October 17 along with members of the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU).

SEIU Local 73 stands in solidarity with CTU, whose members remain on strike, and is encouraging all members to honor CTU picket lines.

Summary of the ratified contract includes:

Pay Increases: CPS support staff won wage increases ranging from 17% to nearly 40% over five years, life-changing improvements for the custodians, security officers, bus aides and SECAs who work to create safe and clean teaching environments, especially for students with special needs.

Work/Life Balance: CPS support staff can now accrue up to 40 days of earned sick time. Custodians won back up to two weeks of paid vacation that were taken away in 2015 negotiations and bus aides won back six paid vacation days that were taken away in 2015 negotiations. Also, CPS support staff can choose to receive holiday pay for select holidays.

Greater Security: CPS is no longer allowed to take away negotiated pay increases under any circumstances. CPS support staff can now enjoy security in knowing their negotiated pay increases are secure and will not be reversed. There are also no increases in out-of-pocket deductibles or co-pays for health insurance. Layoff recall rights are also increased from 10 months to two years.

Commitment to Special Education: For the first time, Special Education Classroom Assistants will have self-directed prep and planning time scheduled throughout the school year. The contract will also support SECAs' dedication to special education students, protecting them from being used as utility workers and from being used for the general student population rather than their assigned students.

Clean Schools: CPS support staff won a seat at the table in all future discussions about who should manage the cleaning of our schools and how it should be done. CPS support staff have created a quick response process to unsanitary conditions in CPS schools to hold Sodexo and Aramark accountable to the standards students deserve. SEIU Local 73 members will continue to demand that Sodexo and Aramark no longer manage CPS employed custodians, as they have failed to provide students with clean schools, particularly in overwhelmingly Black and Brown communities.

Solidarity with CTU: SEIU Local 73 members have and will continue to stand with CTU in their demands for Schools Our Children Deserve, including smaller class size, increased staffing and prep time. We believe the solidarity forged through the strike between our two unions will have long lasting implications for the future of our schools as well as the labor movement in Chicago.

The newly ratified contract includes the following specific benefits and changes for each job category:

Special Education Classroom Assistants (SECAs)

- About a 40% wage increase for new SECAs hired for the current school year
- Up to 38% wage increase for SECAs with 20 plus years of experience

Bus aides

- 17-27% wage increases based on years of service
- 13 paid days off (sick time and personal days), nearly double the 7 they receive now
- Equitable and fair assignment of hours based on seniority and evaluations

Security officers

- 20-32% wage increases
- Contract defines an “emergency” and spells out when they can be pulled away from their duties for other work

Custodians

- 18-27% wage increases now through the 2020-2021 school year with additional wage negotiations then
- Holding Sodexo and Aramark accountable: custodians can provide quick response to unsanitary conditions without going through private contractors
- When CPS finally decides to have custodians report to school principals, members can bargain over the effects of that change

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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 Schools support staff. For more information please visit the SEIU Local 73 website at www.seiu73.org