

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**UIUC Workers To Hold Strike Authorization Vote**

**Urbana-Champaign** – Food service and building service workers at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, represented by SEIU Local 73, will hold a strike authorization vote on June 29. The union has requested a federal mediator as negotiations with the University are stalled for the approximately 700 workers who provide nutrition to the University community and maintain a clean environment. These workers are a vital link to the success of students and all of the University community.

A major bone of contention for years has been the University's chronic refusal to hire enough service employees, particularly in building service. Understaffing is severe and dangerous. Many workers are currently covering 2-3 vacant jobs, resulting in increased muscle strain and injury, as well as stress, the threat of discipline, and dissatisfaction with the quality of the work when there are not enough workers to do it properly. Many are injured on the job and the University often resists paying workers compensation. Food service workers are laid off four times a year: a week at Thanksgiving, a week during Spring Break, a month over the Winter Break, and three months in the Summer. During this time laid-off employees are not eligible for unemployment and must continue paying for health insurance. Many are on public assistance. Small amounts of work are available, but the work is not steady and often insufficient to cover bills. Many workers lose their phones, cars, or living arrangements in the Summer. This is unfair to workers and the community they serve.

"I am fed up with the disrespect of the University. We, the workers, are planning to do whatever it takes including authorize our bargaining committee to call a strike if necessary," said Dena Gary, head cook at UIUC and SEIU Local 73 Chapter 119 President. "We're ready to do whatever it takes, including taking a strike vote and following through on it, to win a better future for ourselves, our families and the UIUC community we serve."

Food service and building workers last went on strike in 2013, causing the University to declare a state of emergency and suspended civil service rules. The University recently received a 5% increase to its state appropriation, but in negotiations officials are offering 18 cents an hour, less than 1%, to the workers. This is not enough for workers who are just making ends meet.

"We are working with food service and building workers to assure that their bargaining rights are respected. These workers are essential, and the campus simply cannot run smoothly without them. We believe every worker deserves dignity and respect at their job. We want UIUC to negotiate in good faith. If the University doesn't get the message, if the stonewalling continues and they don't do what's right, make no mistake; the fight will continue," Joseph Richert, Secretary Treasurer of SEIU Local 73.

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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.*