

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE | seiu73.org

Monday, July 27, 2020

Contact: Jesús Canchola Sánchez, jsanchez@seiu73.org, (312) 588-7534

Chicago Park District Workers Demand Seat At The Table For Their Own Protection As COVID-19 Risk Increases

Workers Are Concerned For Their Safety, The Safety of Their Families & Communities They Serve

Chicago - Over 2,500 Chicago Park District (CPkD) workers, represented by SEIU Local 73, are on the front lines providing quality service to the Chicago community during the pandemic. As infections increase so does the risk of workers providing needed services. Blackhawk Park, Columbus Park, and Haas Park are some of the parks that have been recently closed due to the risk of COVID-19 infection. At least 40 CPkD workers have had to be quarantined because of potential exposure. At least one CPkD worker has died because of COVID-19 complications in the last two weeks.

"We have lost a sister at Columbus Park. My prayers are with her family. I am concerned for my safety and the safety of my family. Chicago Park District administration must be more transparent and communicative with its workers or more workers will be infected," said Regis Banks, Chicago Park District worker and SEIU Local 73 Executive Board Member. "The Chicago Park District can do better to protect workers. They must tell us when parks close due to an infection. I want to know what the infection rate is at the parks. Tell me why PPE is not readily available. Listen to me and all front-line staff. We are risking our lives, our families lives to keep the parks open."

"Workers are scared and depressed because we are being treated like robots and not human beings. The Chicago Park District must be professional and be transparent with its workers and the community we serve," said Cheryl Hill-Beverly, Chicago Park District worker. "We are demanding a meeting with leadership to assure the parks are safe for everyone."

Since April of this year, workers have been requesting Chicago Park District leadership to allow their involvement in developing plans and protocols to assure the safety of the parks for everyone. Chicago Park District leadership has not responded to these requests of involvement.

"The sad reality is that the Chicago Park District could have prevented further infections among its workers. They have not provided essential PPE as readily as needed and communication from them has been disjointed," said Jeffrey Howard, SEIU Local 73 Executive Vice President. "We are fighting for workers to receive the support they deserve. Protect CPkD workers by including them in the conversation of how to keep workers and the community safe at the parks."

SEIU Local 73 is calling for a meeting with Chicago Park District leadership to discuss how workers can have a seat at the table to discuss safety measures and protocols to avoid further infections while maintaining the essential services the parks provide open to all of the Chicago community.

###

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.