



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Eric Bailey, ebailey@seiu73.org

CPS Plan to Hire Non-Union Workers Fails to Ensure Safety of Reopening

Chicago, IL - Today, Chicago Public Schools (CPS) announced they will be hiring 2,000 new workers to reopen schools in January, despite the ongoing pandemic.

CPS claims these so-called temporary workers, half of whom will be non-union, low wage workers, will be supervising students when teachers are working remotely.

“This is a question of safety,” said Science Meles, Executive Vice President of SEIU Local 73, representing Special Education Classroom Assistants (SECA), custodians, security officers, bus aides and parent workers. “SEIU Local 73 and CTU have been asking CPS to work with us to ensure everyone can return to school safely. Instead, CPS seems to be pretending the pandemic is already over.”

With preschool and special education cluster programs returning on January 11, these students will require the specialized services SECAs provide. Introducing non-trained workers to float between classrooms could create a super spreader event. CPS has yet to state steps being taken to ensure the health and safety of all students and staff.

“The thought of untrained workers coming into classrooms is frightening,” said Meles. “These students need staff who understand their educational needs. Once again, CPS appears to be taking advantage of Black and Brown workers, during desperate economic times and a pandemic, and asking them to risk their lives without any sort of benefit.”

CPS was supposed to hire 400 custodians in August to help with cleaning and disinfecting schools. They have yet to fill even half of those positions. Hiring 2,000 new staff is an unrealistic goal and one that puts the school community at risk.

SEIU Local 73 continues to demand a seat at the table to ensure the health and safety of everyone at CPS.

###

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.