



# SEIU LOCAL 73

*STRONGER TOGETHER*

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT STRIKES

If you have an urgent question, contact your Bargaining Team or Contract Action Team Member or your Union Organizer

### **Why are we talking about striking at Cook County?**

Our goal is to reach an agreement with the County sooner, not later, that respects us and the work we do. A contract that respects the many of us that were frontline essential workers through the COVID pandemic. A contract that makes Cook County a Provider of Choice and an Employer of Choice. A contract that includes:

- Appropriate staffing to provide the care and service our patients and community deserve
- Increased steps that reward experience and longevity
- Fair raises every year for every worker
- Equal pay for equal work
- Pandemic Pay
- Affordable healthcare for members and retirees
- Investing in current workers with 100% tuition reimbursement and increased funds for continuing education
- A healthy and safe workplace

We are voting to authorize a strike now so that we are prepared and ready to strike if the County refuses to agree to the contract that we deserve.

### **What about our patients?**

SEIU Local 73 Cook County workers believe that all CCH patients deserve a safe and clean hospital. It's important to remember that part of the reason we are considering a strike is to force Cook County to address and resolve issues that are impacting citizens and patients, including safe staffing levels and clean facilities. Cook County administration will have to pay attention to the critical services SEIU Local 73 members provide every day.

### **Can we win?**

The County owns the buildings and controls the accounts, but they don't do the work. We own our work and they can't take care of the people we serve. If we stand together throughout this contract fight we will win.

### **How long will the strike last?**

Until we get the contract we deserve.

### **What if I don't strike?**

It's important to understand that "not striking" is a form of action against your colleagues and yourself and has serious consequences. It sends a message to the County that we are weak and divided, it also tells them that you are okay with the status quo for you and your co-workers.

**What about the Temporary Restraining Order (TRO) and Court ordered injunction?** The TRO and injunctions still are in effect. But it only affects about 25% of our members in Cook County Health and the Sheriff's Office. If there is a strike, then we will abide by the court order. We will meet with the County in advance to identify the enjoined employees. If you are enjoined and required to work, then you will know in advance. But you should still picket during non-work times.

**How will picketing work?**

Socially distanced picketing in to-be-determined centralized locations. Safety is the main priority, but physical presence during the strike is necessary. Striking is not just about withholding our labor, but also making our case to the greater community we serve. It will depend on where you work, but there will be picket lines established, though we will ensure safety will be highlighted within them.

**What does a strike look like for those of us that are currently working from home?** Most importantly you DO NOT work. Depending on your job and location, there will be centralized pickets socially distant with liaisons, and other precautions. There needs to be a presence the entire time, but it won't look like pickets under non-pandemic circumstances. Employees working from home should turn off all work devices and leave an auto-response explaining that they are on strike until further notice.

**Does the no strike clause apply to any of the contracts?**

No, since the contracts are expired, the no strike clause will no longer apply. We will provide the required legal notice to the County before any strike takes place.

**Can I be retaliated against for striking? What Legal protections do we have if we strike?**

Retaliation is 100% illegal and there are multiple Unfair Labor Practice charges already filed that provide further legal protection. Cook County knows that and is on notice.

**Do I have to call in during the strike?**

The Union will have already informed Cook County that the bargaining unit will be striking. There is no legal requirement for you to inform management that you will be participating in the strike.

**Should I tell my manager that I am striking?**

No, you are not obligated to tell your manager if you are striking and you should not tell them.

**Can I take benefit time to get paid while striking?**

No. This goes against the precedent that we are striking over. We stand together to show Cook County that we are fighting for our lives, and we are willing to make sacrifices to get what we deserve. If a few people in each department are getting paid while striking? What does that say to our colleagues that are on strike and not getting paid? It's basically crossing the picket line.

**Can I go on strike if I'm on Probation?**

Yes. And you deserve to fight for what you believe in and demand improvements for now and your future at Cook County. You are protected under Illinois Labor Law to strike just as much as your more senior colleagues. If you feel like you are being singled out or retaliated against you need to let one of the Reps or the Member Action Center know immediately.

**Will I be paid to be on the picket line?**

We encourage everyone to do what they need to do to financially prepare to potentially be without wages. With that said, can you afford not to strike when the County arrogantly refuses to address any of our concerns? The more people that vote yes, commit to strike, and actually stop working, the more pressure you put on Cook County, the more they get the message to start taking our needs seriously.

**Are we demanding pandemic pay?**

Yes. Back to the end of last year. They made us the bottom priority by offering pandemic pay to us last. With that said, pandemic pay is a demand and needs as much support as the other demands. For it to be won, a strike vote and an eventual strike will need to have significant support and follow through.

**Do we train agency or any replacement employees that are here to work during the strike?**

You are under no obligation to train agency or replacement workers unless management gives you a firm and clear directive to do so. If they do so, contact your SEIU Local 73 Organizer.

**How real is the threat of workers being replaced?**

Threats or comments from management about replacing workers is illegal and constitutes an unfair labor practice that Cook County will be charged with if any manager engages in them. If you suspect that your manager is committing unfair labor practices, please contact your SEIU Local 73 Organizer.