



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Eric Bailey, ebailey@seiu73.org, Zachary Braun, zbraun@senatedem.ilga.gov

Gov. Pritzker Signs Law Protecting Workers' Right to Organize and Strike

Chicago, IL – “Our union applauds Governor Pritzker for protecting workers’ rights by signing HB2521,” said Dian Palmer, president of SEIU Local 73. “We especially thank Senator Ram Villivalam (D-8) and Representative Edgar Gonzalez, Jr. (D-21) for championing this bill. Our thanks also go to the Illinois AFL-CIO, AFSCME Council 31, and the Illinois Federation of Teachers for working with us to pass this important legislation.”

"Protecting the right to strike is essential to the survival of the labor movement," said State Senator Ram Villivalam (D-Chicago). "Our plan will protect our brothers and sisters from retaliation in the workplace as they advocate for a living wage, decent benefits and better working conditions. I am proud to have championed this vital legislation."

HB2521 amends the Illinois Labor Relations Act and the Illinois Education Labor Relations Act to allow labor unions to collect show of interest cards and electronically cast ballots, expands the life of these cards to 12 months, and allows workers to file an unfair labor practice if they face retaliation or permanent replacement during a lawful strike.

HB2521 also restores workers’ rights to strike without fear of permanent replacement. Employers have frequently used the threat of permanent replacement to divide solidarity among workers and defeat strikes. These threats can be issued before workers even go on strike, and can be used after strikes to punish workers and prevent future strikes.

When Local 73 members went on strike in 2020 and 2021, the University of Illinois at Chicago and Cook County Health flew in strikebreakers from COVID hotspot states without requiring them to quarantine, a complete disregard of emergency travel orders and the health and safety of staff and patients. The strikebreakers worked alongside union workers who were forced to train them to do their jobs. Workers faced further intimidation after the strike ended. Management at UIC accused union workers of bringing COVID into the hospital, and some workers had comments made in their records indicating “no call, no show, unapproved, and unsupervised.”

“The right to strike is a necessary tool workers must sometimes use in order to fight for fair and equal treatment in the workplace,” said Palmer. “UIC and Cook County tried every tactic to defeat these strikes and failed. Our victories were due to our solidarity and fighting together for the rights and benefits we deserve.”

###

SEIU Local 73 represents more than 31,000 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.