



For Immediate Release

CONTACT: Eric Bailey, ebailey@seiu73.org

Cook County Workers Demand Agreed-Upon Pandemic Pay

CHICAGO, IL – Cook County essential workers, represented by SEIU Local 73, rallied outside Stroger Hospital to demand Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle release agreed to pandemic pay and bonuses while the parties await an arbitration decision on remaining issues.

"It's been nearly one year since our historic 18-day strike. But while President Preckwinkle receives a \$17,000 raise, workers who have given their all during a pandemic have not been given their agreed-upon pay," said SEIU Local 73 President Dian Palmer. "Preckwinkle and her staff have falsely claimed that state labor law prohibits an MOA while awaiting an arbitration ruling. We're here today because we know that's not true."

"Our members have waited patiently for their money. These workers walked into this hospital when everyone else was trying to get out. They showed up. And as a thank you, Preckwinkle refuses to provide the money the federal government gave Cook County for these workers. That's not right!"

At the end of the strike 2021, SEIU Local 73 and Cook County came to an agreement on across the board raises, pay equity, and hazard pay for work during the pandemic. This agreement does not impact the issues being arbitrated, and union members state that they're tired of waiting.

"Toni Preckwinkle has turned her back on us and continues to make us feel undervalued," said Ward Clerk Eugenia Harris. "She makes 3-4 times what we make. While we are struggling to make ends meet. She gets a 10% raise while workers wait for more than a year for their raise. It's not that she can't release our pandemic pay, it's that she won't do it. We come to work every day and continue to do our jobs and yet she still won't give us our money."

As they wait for the coming arbitration decision, union workers at Cook County say they're committed to further action until they receive what they believe they're owed.

"For decades, our communities have fought for economic freedom. Our demands are not complex. We want what the County promised us. We need what the County promised us," said Jim Phipps, Administrative Assistant. "I met Toni 35 years ago, and she said she wanted to give our community good representation. She wasted no time in getting rid of workers who did nothing to her. She had the audacity to raise wages for her staff who were working from home. If you do wrong you will reap what you sow."

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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.