

January 10, 2023

To the Management of the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago and Affiliated Agencies:

As leaders in the Jewish community, we stand in support with union members at the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago and affiliated agencies. We are proud of the social services and programs provided to the Jewish community and broader Chicagoland area by CJE SeniorLife, Jewish Child and Family Services, Jewish Community Centers of Chicago, and Jewish United Fund. The staff at these organizations stand on the frontlines to help the most vulnerable individuals in our communities by providing essential services including counseling, education and childcare, services for people who have disabilities, patient care in long-term care and assisted living facilities, immigrant and refugee services, and many other programs that promote the well-being of our community.

Core to our Jewish values are the ideas of avodah (sacred service) and tzedek (justice). Our sages believed that work should be a means of granting dignity to workers, and that one's wages should be sufficient to pay for one's family's basic needs. Justice means guaranteeing that our social service programs are fully funded and sustained in a manner that ensures that the highest level of service is provided to members of our community. New challenges brought on by the pandemic, such as inflation, high-risk working conditions, and low staffing have greatly impacted workers and their capacity to meet community needs, and as such, the union is seeking a contract that reflects the nature of this work. Union members are coming together to call for:

ADEQUATE STAFFING -

Significant turnover over the past 3 years has resulted in low staffing, challenging working conditions, and difficulties meeting community needs. Union members need significant pay increases to meet the present market and adjust for inflation, compensation for overtime work or working out of job title, pay equity, and manageable workloads in order to increase staffing and provide high-quality care to our communities.

BENEFITS THAT PROMOTE A FAMILY-FRIENDLY WORKPLACE -

Affordable healthcare for families and dependents, increased paid parental leave, opportunities to save more for retirement, lifting up the lowest-paid employees, and increased paid time off will allow employees to care for themselves and family members.

THE RIGHT TO A STRONG UNION -

Jewish Federation workers are fighting for some of the basic protections that can be found in any union contract, including having all staff who are covered under the contract recognized as union members (rather than a structure that reflects "right to work" laws), the opportunity to grieve unjust terminations for professional staff, and the right to robust union representation through adequate steward representation and a representative bargaining committee.

As the Jewish Federation aims to make the world a better place, their own workers are an important part of that vision. In order for the community to endure, we need to invest in community-based programs and social services, support the right to fair union representation in the workplace, and must foster family-friendly and sustainable working conditions.

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Rabbi Aryeh Bernstein, National Jewish Educator, Avodah

Rabbi David Eber, Jewish Reconstructionist Congregation

Rabbi Bruce Elder, Congregation Hakafa

Rabbi Menachem Cohen, Mitziut

Rabbi Deena Cowans, Mishkan Chicago

Rabbi Michael Davis (Evanston, IL)

Rabbi Laurence Edwards, Congregation Or Chadash (Emeritus)

Rabbi Josh Feigelson

Rabbi Capers Funnye, Beth Shalom B'nai Zaken E.H.C.

Rabbi Maralee Gordon, McHenry County Jewish Congregation (Emerita)

Rabbi Suzanne Griffel

Rabbi Goldie Guy, Hadar Chicago

Rabbi Ari Hart, Skokie Valley Agudath Jacob

Rabbi Lizzi Heydemann, Mishkan Chicago

Rabbi Andrea London, Beth Emet The Free Synagogue

Rabbi Rachel Mikva, Chicago Theological Seminary

Rabbi Nina Mizrahi, CCAR

Rabbi Marianne Novak

Rabbi Steven Philp, Mishkan Chicago

Rabbi Frederick Reeves, KAM Isaiah Israel

Rabbi Ralph Ruebner, Truah

Rabbi Danya Ruttenberg

Rabbi Isaac Serotta, Makom Solel Lakeside

Rabbi Max Weiss, Oak Park Temple B'nai Abraham Zion

Rabbi Rachel Weiss, Jewish Reconstructionist Congregation

Rabbi David Wolkenfeld, Anshe Sholom B'nai Israel Congregation

(The views expressed in this letter are solely those of the individual signees and do not necessarily represent those of their respective institutions. Institutions and titles are provided for identification purposes only.)