



**For Immediate Release**

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## **Chicago Park District Contract Bargaining Begins as Short Staffing Impacts Pools and Programs**

**Chicago, IL** – Contract bargaining is set to begin today between the Chicago Park District and SEIU Local 73 which represents more than 2,800 regular and seasonal workers. The previous contract took more than a year to negotiate.

“We are hopeful we can quickly reach a fair and equitable contract for the workers who keep Chicago’s parks, pools, and beaches safe and maintained for everyone who enjoy them,” said Executive Vice President Jeffrey Howard. “These essential workers provide a vital service to our communities. They worked throughout the pandemic to keep facilities safe for the public. They deserve to be respected, protected, and paid for their service.”

“While our pools and beaches may be opening on Friday, the Park District still has staffing shortages,” said Adolfo Flores, Natatorium Instructor at 12<sup>th</sup> Street Beach. “The modest \$600 training bonus for new lifeguards fails to address the long-term wage improvements needed for recruitment and retention. The average hourly pay for lifeguards is just over \$16. New York City increased its hourly pay to \$21.26 for first and second-year lifeguards with an additional \$1,000 bonus. It’s time for the Chicago Park District to respect us, protect us, and pay us.”

“Short staffing limits our ability to provide services to families who use the parks every summer. The Chicago Park District spends millions on new administrative buildings and hiring administrative staff, yet Local 73 members who serve the community do not receive the support or compensation they need to provide quality services. We are expected to do more with less. It’s time for the Park District to respect us and pay us what we deserve,” said Chanel Sims, Park Supervisor at Tuley Park.

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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.*