



**For Immediate Release**

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## **Staffing Issues Impact Chicago Park District Pool Openings**

**Chicago, IL** – On the first day of pools and beaches opening for the summer, Chicago Park District workers report understaffing that poses a safety risk for the public and caused delayed openings at some pools.

Park Supervisors reported severe understaffing at pools across the city to their union. Ping Tom Park Pool normally has 10 lifeguards assigned but only three are assigned this summer. Austin Town Hall Park Pool has only one assigned lifeguard for the summer; today, three additional lifeguards were temporarily assigned to this location. Cornell Park Pool has two lifeguards assigned compared to their standard five lifeguards. Park Supervisors also report fewer assigned lifeguards at McKinley Park Pool, Harrison Park Pool, Ridge Pool, Bessemer Pool, and Eckhart Pool.

Additionally, short staffing caused delays in pool openings. Wentworth Gardens Pool did not open on time due to understaffing.

In previous years, pools were open all seven days of the week. This year, pools will only be open five days out of the week.

“On the first day of pools and beaches opening to the public, we are seeing staffing shortages across the city,” said Local 73 Executive Vice President Jeffrey Howard. “Chicago Park District workers have been speaking out and demanding adequate staffing in our parks to keep our parks, pools, and beaches safe. These are essential workers who risked their lives during the pandemic. It’s time for the Park District to respect, protect, and pay them what they deserve.”

“Understaffing of our pools and beaches is a major safety risk for the public and puts more stress on lifeguards,” said Adolfo Flores, Natatorium Instructor at 12th Street Beach. “We are stretched thin and go home exhausted because of staff shortages. At my beach, we are scrambling and promoting new seasonal employees to supervisor roles with little to no training. We must raise the starting wage for lifeguards to fully staff our pools and keep patrons safe.”

SEIU Local 73 started bargaining a new contract with the Chicago Park District on June 21. Workers are demanding pay improvements to address recruitment and retention issues, in addition to health care for part-time employees and more monthly positions.

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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.*