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Decatur School District #61 Custodians Deliver Strike Notice to Board of Education

Decatur, IL – Decatur SD #61 Custodians have delivered their 10-day strike notice to the Board of Education. SEIU Local 73 represents 80 custodians who have been bargaining since February while the board has claimed workers are overpaid compared to districts like Kankakee which is three hours away. Bloomington School District which is much closer and similar in size to Decatur pays its custodians more.

Workers spoke before the Board of Education meeting calling on the district to provide the custodians with a living wage in their contract.

“It’s time for the district to bargain in good faith and resolve our contract so we can continue to serve our students,” **said Amanda Francis, Chief Steward and Custodian of six years.** “It is clear they aren’t taking negotiations seriously. Our goal is to negotiate a fair contract. If we must strike to secure it we will.”

According to the MIT Living Wage Calculator, custodians with one child are currently underpaid by \$13.23 an hour. Health insurance cost increases will only increase the wage gap for these essential workers.

“The leaders of this district have repeatedly shown a lack of respect for these essential custodians,” **said Joseph Richert, Secretary-Treasurer of SEIU Local 73.** “During the challenges of the pandemic, the custodial staff worked hard to keep the schools safe and clean. It’s crucial that they are given the recognition and fair pay they deserve for their hard work.”

Workers are set to begin striking on or after Monday, September 9. Two more bargaining sessions are scheduled with a federal mediator on August 29 and September 4.

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SEIU Local 73 represents more than 35,000 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.