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Cambridge City Council Vote on Resolution to Support Security Officers Efforts to Unionize

Officers in Contract Negotiations for Better Wages, Access to Health Care

Cambridge, Mass. (November 17, 2008) - The City of Cambridge, Massachusetts City Council voted on a resolution tonight to support security officers in their ongoing campaign to ensure that security officers have better wages and decent benefits, including access to health care and sick days. The resolution was supported by Cambridge Mayor E. Denise Simmons and City Councilors Marjorie Decker and Kenneth Reeves.

The resolution resolved that the Cambridge City Council call upon “property owners and large tenants in Cambridge to endorse the goals of the Security Officers employed in their buildings and publicly urge the security contractors they hire or are in their buildings to bargain fairly and in good faith with the Security Officers; and be it further.”

Security officers, who guard some of the largest commercial properties in Boston and in Cambridge, are currently in negotiations with security contractors to achieve higher wages, beyond the poverty wages they are receiving, and to attain decent benefits, rather than the meager ones they receive now.

In particular, officers are focusing on better access to quality health care. Currently, 23% of security officers are on MassHealth. Another 12% have no insurance whatsoever and will take the penalty under the provisions of the health insurance law in the Commonwealth. To illustrate the situation that officers are facing with regards to their

health insurance coverage, as little as \$3,000 would pay for a year's worth of health insurance for one officer.

In June, officers employed by three of the area's largest security services companies won union recognition. The new SEIU 615 members are working to improve their wages, benefits and training. Security officers are currently in the process of deciding what their next step will be to achieving a fair and reasonable contract in the coming weeks.

On average, security officers make on average between \$11 and \$12 an hour, even though they protect multimillion dollar properties in Boston and the surrounding region. Most officers are struggling to make ends meet and are working two or three jobs to do so. A good percentage of the workforce lives in communities of color which are struggling with poverty and its related increase violence. Small increases in wages can have a major economic impact. For instance, a slight increase in their wages for the security officer workforce in Massachusetts, which is approximately 21,500 workers, would help the economy overall because it would put an millions of dollars in Massachusetts communities seeking to rebuild from the bottom up.

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With 2 million members, SEIU is the fastest growing Union in the United States, and the largest union of property service workers in the United States. SEIU Local 615 represents 16,000 property service workers in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island. The organization of security officers to join SEIU Local 615 is the largest effort to unionize African Americans in the city of Boston's history.