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**SEIU Local 615 Announces Campaign to Organize Boston and
Cambridge Security Officers**

*- Elected and Community Leaders Pledge Support to Work for Decent Wages, Increased
Training for Security Officers -*

February 15, 2006, Boston, Mass. – Elected officials and religious leaders joined with SEIU Local 615 today to announce a campaign organizing more than 5,000 underpaid and under-trained security officers who serve as Boston and Cambridge’s first line of defense.

“The security officers we see everyday in our high rise buildings and universities protect us, yet we are not protecting them,” said Rocio Saenz, president of SEIU Local 615.

“These men and women make on average \$10 an hour – equivalent to \$320 a week. That means 40 hours of hard, stressful work won’t pay the rent, buy the groceries and purchase health care. This is unacceptable. Full time work deserves full time pay.”

Area religious and elected leaders voiced their support for the campaign at the event. Reverend Dr. Gregory G. Groover Sr., senior pastor of The Historic Charles Street AME Church, announced he would be calling the heads of the area’s largest security firms to schedule meetings with these executives, himself and Rocio Saenz. “At a time when so many of our youth are falling prey to the perils of the street, we have an obligation as a community to provide real alternatives. A weekly check of \$320 is not a real alternative. There is something wrong when the people who protect the most expensive real estate in the area can barely afford to make ends meet,” Groover said.

A majority of the security officers in Boston and Cambridge are of African and Caribbean decent. This campaign will be the largest drive to organize black workers in Boston’s history.

Boston City Councilors Michael Flaherty and Chuck Turner, Cambridge Mayor Kenneth E. Reeves, Cambridge City Councilor Marjorie Decker, State Rep. Gloria Fox, and State Senator Jarrett T. Barrios joined Saenz in demanding that private security firms allow

their workers to join SEIU 615 for better pay, benefits and training. Speakers also said higher wages for security officers would have an immediate ripple effect on Boston's minority neighborhoods.

“We know one of the most effective ways to make safer neighborhoods is to provide stable, well-paying jobs to the people living there,” said Representative Fox. “These men and women would consider making this a career if they thought that they could have career advancement, professional training, and a reasonable wage. But instead they can't make a living wage and thus they can't put funds back into our neighborhoods and stimulate growth and hope. Continuing down this path will not improve our neighborhoods; we must demand these security companies make an immediate turn in the right direction.”

“Protecting people is a job I take very seriously,” said Owen Baker, a security officer. “But it is hard because we are not given the respect that we deserve for protecting people and property. I want to make sure I have the right training and right experience to do the best job possible.”

Because of the low pay, turnover of security guards can be between 100 and 300 percent. With that extreme turnover, a guard cannot get to know the surroundings and the people well enough to provide the best security for the area's buildings and universities.

Senator Barrios, who serves as the Senate Chair of the Joint Committee on Public Safety and Homeland Security, spoke of the importance of training and career development to the security of all residents and workers in Boston and Cambridge. “On 9-11 the reality that America needed to rapidly and dramatically improve its security was driven home to all of us,” Barrios said. “New protocols were put in place involving IDs, detection equipment, criteria for entering our public buildings. It is time we gave our ‘first line of defense’ the tools they need to do their jobs.”

Leaders of SEIU Local 615 announced that more than 100 community leaders and residents have signed on to a pledge to stand with security officers as they fight to improve their working conditions. That pledge, and information about the “Stand for Security” campaign, is available at SEIU Local 615's website at: <http://www.seiu615.org/onthejob/security/index.cfm>. Signers to the pledge include all of Boston and Cambridge's City Councilors, Massachusetts Democratic Party Chairman Philip Johnston, many state representatives and senators, and many religious and community leaders.

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With 1.8 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.