
FIGHTING FOR ECONOMIC JUSTICE

WHEREAS:

Job loss during the pandemic has hit people of color especially hard at a rate of 13% for African-Americans and 15% for Hispanics as opposed to 9% for Caucasians; and

WHEREAS:

Foreign born workers have faced a 19% downturn; and

WHEREAS:

BENTE/AFSCME represents an overwhelming number of immigrants, African-Americans, and Hispanics, particularly in the fields of food services and school security; and

WHEREAS:

The RCSD is proposing a 57% reduction in school security staff and a 67% reduction in school food services for a total of 221 workers; and

WHEREAS:

The RCSD would diminish the BENTE bargaining unit by a total of 392 positions (221 layoffs and 171 vacancies) for a total of 28% of the bargaining unit; and

WHEREAS:

Food service and security staff were instrumental in feeding students throughout the first wave of the pandemic, putting at risk their personal safety and the safety of their own family members; and

WHEREAS:

These members were deemed “essential” during the first wave of the pandemic, and their actions can be described as nothing short of heroic, receiving no extra pay, unlike workers for Monroe County who received hazardous pay within similar fields of employment; and

WHEREAS:

BENTE/AFSCME put forth a well-constructed plan to keep school security staff and food service workers employed throughout the minimum ten week shutdown period – a plan that consists of providing vital services to communities of color by opening schools and cafeterias, providing hot meals and home meal delivery to low income communities, and performing constant student outreach and home visits; and

WHEREAS:

BENTE/AFSCME proposed to the RCSD in excess of two million dollars in savings over the ten week shutdown period as a result of not filling 150+ BENTE vacancies, eliminating overtime and substitute costs, and custodial staff losing 10% of their income by not receiving night differential; and

WHEREAS:

The RCSD is putting students at risk of falling further behind due to a lack of nutrition, inadequate remote learning facilities, and insufficient tools to engage students; and

WHEREAS:

People of color are disadvantaged and denied opportunities to earn fair incomes and the goals of BENTE/AFSCME are to promote an economy that works for all; and

WHEREAS:

The Board of Education Non-Teaching Employees Union is affiliated with AFSCME International, an organization with a past, present and future deeply rooted in the fight against racism and the struggle to build the bridge connecting labor rights, economic rights, human rights and civil rights for all. These fights are our fights, as exemplified by the historic 1968 Memphis Sanitation Worker Strike and the sacrifice of 1,300 men and their families who stood in the face of oppression, bigotry and brutality to demand change, a change that ultimately cost Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. his life.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That because economic justice is at the forefront of our efforts, BENTE/AFSCME is unable to become complicit in any attempt to further erode the income of its members, consisting of hundreds of disadvantaged African-American and Hispanic individuals and hard-working immigrants in food services and school security; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That the Executive Board of BENTE/AFSCME Local 2419 stand united against any layoffs to our members, noting the savings of in excess of 2 million dollars through 150 vacancies that remain unfilled, a loss of 10% income for custodial employees, and a reduction in substitute costs and overtime pay disparately affecting hourly employees; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That the leadership of BENTE/AFSCME identifies with the economic hardship that BENTE members already endure, particularly coming off of unpaid months in the summer;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That the leadership of BENTE/AFSCME recognizes that these workers have undergone extensive training to make them invaluable to the organization and that their skills can be utilized

in an effort to help families keep students engaged during this difficult time, with many of our members rooted in the communities, speaking multiple languages, with established relationships; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That the leadership of BENTE/AFSCME make it clear to the Rochester Board of Education the irreparable harm that cuts of this magnitude would have on the lives of our members: people of all colors, city residents, constituents, parents, grandparents, nieces, nephews, aunts, uncles, and other family members; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That BENTE/AFSCME will not support any Member of the Board of Education who could approve such a detrimental act to our workforce and the community we support.