

Dear Colleagues,

Many of us are joining to form a union and want to give everyone at Forterra the opportunity to feel included and informed. Like everyone at Forterra, we believe in the work we do and in the mission, vision, values, and future of Forterra. [Forterra's mission](#) is to support a healthy environment and resilient communities for all, and in forming an employee union, we hope to foster a healthy environment and resilient community within our organization. We believe in the values of Forterra and believe that the act of forming a union aligns with our organizational values:

- We act with urgency and creativity, managing risks to attain better outcomes
- We show respect for people, place, culture, and each other
- We are results oriented, taking pride in the quality and outcomes of our work
- We are honest and keep our promises. We take the courage to disagree and commit
- We seek inclusive solutions that make a difference on the ground

We know that having a union will benefit each of us and our organization as a whole, as forming a union would give employees a stronger voice in decisions that impact our work and allow us to make important improvements such as:

- Cultivating equity and transparency around organizational decisions, compensation, and benefits with wages that reflect the level of responsibility
- Implementing meaningful changes to move towards racial equity and centering BIPOC colleagues in this process
- Creating a standardized, transparent, and fair discipline process
- Advocating for appropriate staffing levels and reducing the negative impacts of burn-out and employee turnover
- Building a culture where we can better advocate for ourselves, each other, and the work we do without fear of retaliation

We believe this is possible as we have seen examples from other local non-profit organizations, such as [Northwest Justice Project](#), [Youth Care](#), and [Solid Ground](#), who have all recently organized with OPEIU Local 8, as well as [King Conservation District](#) who organized with Washington Federation of State Employees. These organizations all made significant improvements to their organizational culture with their first contracts. And over time, other unionized non-profits have been able to continue to lift the standards and create a culture where staff have a powerful voice at their organizations.

Forming a union means we will have a legally protected process and a united voice when we approach leadership to make positive changes. We are not organizing because we are against leadership or Forterra, as an organization. We all work at Forterra because we care deeply and are proud of the work we are doing. We want Forterra to be the best that it can be for its employees and for the communities and lands that we serve.

Because a union means a sharing of power, leadership may initially be resistant to the process. However, we hope the Executive Leadership Team and the Board will be supportive of our efforts to make Forterra a more democratic workplace and recognize that, not unlike the work we do to support a healthy environment and resilient communities, employee unions can foster healthier, stronger, and more resilient organizations. We ask them to remain neutral in this process and allow staff to organize without interference.

We invite you to join us in this hopeful and positive journey and have attached an FAQ sheet and here is an [informational brochure](#) with more details and contact information. Once everyone has had an opportunity to have questions answered and show support for forming a union by signing [this card](#), we can have our Union legally recognized through either voluntary recognition by our employer or a secret ballot election run by the National Labor Relations Board.

We will be hosting a kickoff celebration on July 21st, 2021 from 6-7pm. Please RSVP to Corinne Cosentino, the Organizing Director at OPEIU Local 8, for the zoom link at Corinne@opeiu8.org. If you are able, please join us to share ideas, ask questions, and get all the information you need to make this important decision about our shared future. If you cannot attend this meeting, please reach out to Corinne to set up a time to meet. Please feel free to contact any of us if you would like more information or have any questions.

In Solidarity,

Andrew Shifflette
Charlie Vogelheim
Christine Stephens
Daniel Cuevas
Elby Jones
Maya Klem
Nicole Marcotte
Rebecca Schwartzman
Sarah Sanborn
Sarah Wyer
And others who wish to remain anonymous