

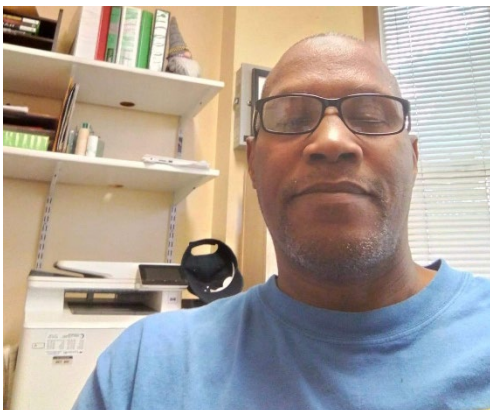
We're Voting Yes to Form Our Union at Friends of Youth

The [open letter](#) we shared in December, written and signed by employees across the agency, described a hopeful vision for a workplace where we are empowered “to all have a positive effect on agency decision-making that impacts us and the youth we serve.” Not on our own or in fear of retaliation, but in coordination with each other and with support from our fellow union siblings at other union-represented agencies like ours. For some of us, the open letter was the first we had heard of the idea of forming a union, as those working on this idea realized if we were going to contact coworkers whom we hadn't had the chance to meet, we may as well bring the conversation out in the open. Now that we are all in communication and moving forward, we believe this is an opportunity to make Friends of Youth more democratic and equitable, and that the future we are working for is healthier, stronger, and more sustainable. We are encouraged to be at this stage where we can vote Yes (and another Yes for those of us who are Professionals), and get started completing surveys, electing our Bargaining Team and negotiating our First Contract!



"The idea of a union makes me hopeful for the future of this agency and for all current and future workers here. Through helping unionizing efforts I've heard people all across the agency, despite how siloed off everyone is, sharing similar stories about systemic lack of support and trainings, feelings that people who don't understand program needs are making policies that sometimes hurt staff and youth, and inequitable pay. **I'm looking forward to the day our voices can no longer be ignored, and we can have a hand in shaping the future of this agency that so many of us care so deeply about.**" – *Tahni Nikitins, Residential Youth Specialist at Friends of Youth for the last 2.5 years (previously full time, currently relief)*

Ballots will be mailed to the address Friends of Youth provided, or the address we provided to the NLRB if we contacted them with a correction, **this Thursday, February 1**. If we have not received our ballot by February 8, we should contact the NLRB right away at 206-220-6300. The ballot will come with instructions on how to fill it out and as they will explain, **do not sign or make comments or any other marks on the ballot itself** other than marking the appropriate box to vote. Also remember to **sign the back of the yellow return envelope** in the space provided before returning your ballot. No postage is necessary. For the full Election Information communication we shared last week, [click here](#).



"I want to wish all of you great luck in your union vote! I encourage everyone to make sure to vote as soon as you get your ballot and help your coworkers remember – including my fellow on-call/relief staff! I supported forming our union at YouthCare in 2019 and volunteered to be on the Bargaining Team to make sure we were included in everything, and we won \$1.75/hour pay-in-lieu of benefits (in addition to other increases applied to all employees), clarity and more rights around our scheduling, pro-rated holiday pay (if we work over 24 hrs/wk) for all on-call/relief employees! I'm excited for you all and look forward to meeting you at future OPEIU gatherings." – *Tremell Collins, On-Call Youth Counselor in Over-18 Housing Services at YouthCare for over 4 years*

A few more questions we've heard recently:

How much are the dues again? When would they start?

No one will pay dues until **after** we negotiate, review and vote to approve our own union contract. The decision to approve or reject the contract lies with the union employees. This way we will see the results of our efforts first before paying any dues. We wouldn't approve a contract that doesn't make enough improvements; coming out ahead is the whole point of forming a union. The OPEIU Local 8 dues rate was set by the members in 1994 at 1.5% of gross monthly income. A quick way to calculate this is \$15 for every \$1000. We won't pay any initiation fee or any other kind of fee. New employees hired after our contract is in place pay a one-time initiation fee of up to \$150 depending on income, 50% of which can be refunded for attending one meeting.

Will Friends of Youth management know how I voted?

No. The envelope you return your ballot in with your name on it is separated from your ballot itself by the NLRB (National Labor Relations Board) agent before ballots are counted so no one can tell how any individual employee voted.

How will joining a union affect my legal status?

It won't. The only requirement for joining our union is that we be employees of Friends of Youth. There will be no additional documentation or verification of our status involved in the voting process or joining our union at any point. You can find confirmation of this as well as additional information about immigrant worker rights on the [NLRB website here](#).

Reminder: We are all invited to a discussion Wed., Jan 31 from 7pm – 8pm via Zoom

Email corinne@opeiu8.org to request the Zoom link

Please join us for a staff-driven conversation about how Friends of Youth handles DEI. Share your perspective around what is working, what is not working, and what changes you would like to see at Friends of Youth and how our unionizing effort can ensure that we create real anti-racism, anti-discrimination, equity and employee voice changes at the Friend of Youth via our collective bargaining agreement. We had a wonderful conversation with the folks who were able to join last week's discussion and want to build on the momentum of these conversations.

You can also see [this FAQ](#), [more FAQs](#) and/or visit [this page](#) to find all previous updates and related documents.

If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact a coworker signer of the [open letter sent on 12/18/2023](#) or union organizer Corinne at corinne@opeiu8.org or 425-318-2650.