

**Union** ★  
**Update**

**OPEIU**  
Local



*For Local 8 Members at Friends of Youth*

July 19, 2024

## **Bargaining Progress and Wage Increase Concerns**

As you may know, Friends of Youth (FOY) employees exercised their collective power to organize and become a union in February of this year. This means that our employer must now negotiate with us on terms of employment, such as wages, hours, and working conditions, through a process called “collective bargaining.” The goal is to reach a comprehensive document known as a “Collective Bargaining Agreement” (CBA) or “Contract” that outlines our benefits, protections, rights, and holds our employer accountable.

Compensation is a mandatory subject of bargaining, meaning that any changes to our wages are to be negotiated with us and agreed upon mutually. However, during the bargaining period for a first contract, employers must maintain the status quo.

Recently, Friends of Youth announced a 2% wage increase effective July 1, 2024, without notifying or negotiating with us. They claim this increase aligns with maintaining the status quo, stating that FOY provides cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) during the summer as a regular annual event. On July 10th, when we learned of the planned increase, we immediately requested historical data from FOY to support their assertion, as staff have reported no consistent pattern or past practice regarding wage increases at FOY. The employer has yet to provide this data, causing delays in processing the increases.

Here's what we know: a 2% increase is not enough! The rising cost of living, comparable jobs on the market, recruitment and retention challenges at FOY, and the importance of our work warrant a higher increase.

Our Union Bargaining Team proposed a 6.5% wage increase for all employees, effective July 1, 2024. This proposal aimed to provide a more meaningful increase that better addresses employee needs and would ensure fair compensation for our hard work. Despite management's lack of proof of a consistent past practice around COLAs, their attorney presented two options: accept the 2% increase now or have it withheld until we reach an agreement in bargaining. Given that FOY has not responded to the proposed bargaining dates we provided to them back on June 13th, we are not going to hold up this wage increase. Together we will fight for more.

In addition to inadequate wages, many of us are concerned about low staffing, client safety, and a departure from evidence-based harm reduction principles. These issues are contributing to turnover as employees seek more sustainable employment. We are ready to move forward. Together, we will demand what we deserve!

**Questions? Contact Union Representative Phoebe Feldsher at [phoebe@opeiu8.org](mailto:phoebe@opeiu8.org) or 206-441-8880 ext. 119.**



**OFFICE AND PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYEES INTERNATIONAL UNION LOCAL 8**

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