

ORGANIZING AND COLLECTIVE BARGAINING COMMITTEE

Committee Chair: J. Philippe Abraham, New York State United Teachers
Committee Secretary: Olivia Coleman, East St. Louis Federation of Teachers, Local 1220

27. IN SUPPORT OF THE PRO ACT: PROTECTING THE RIGHT TO ORGANIZE

Committee recommends concurrence.

1 WHEREAS, opinion research consistently shows that a majority of
2 American workers would join a union in their workplace if they did not
3 fear getting fired during an organizing campaign; and
4 WHEREAS, the National Labor Relations Act, meant to protect
5 workers in collective action and enable them to organize, has been
6 gutted by adverse court decisions and legislative reforms favoring
7 employers over the years; and
8 WHEREAS, the ability of the National Labor Relations Board to
9 perform its original mission of protecting the right of workers to organize
10 has been severely compromised, such that most private sector unions
11 have given up serious efforts to organize, and when they do attempt to
12 organize, they are subject to extraordinary barriers to success; and
13 WHEREAS, private sector union density, once one-third of the
14 working class, is today, after decades of continuous decline, just over
15 6 percent; and
16 WHEREAS, without strong private sector unions in alliance with
17 public sector unions, the entire labor movement is weakened; and
18 WHEREAS, over the past 40 years, as overall labor movement
19 density has been cut in half, from 20 percent to 10 percent, the
20 consequence has been severe cuts to public education and vital social
21 program funding, and an enormous increase in economic inequality;
22 and
23 WHEREAS, H.R. 2474, the Protecting the Right to Organize Act
24 (PRO Act), would provide critical labor law reforms that would allow
25 unions to organize in the private sector once again with a reasonable
26 assurance of success; and
27 WHEREAS, the PRO Act has already passed the House of
28 Representatives; and
29 WHEREAS, the Senate now has a slim majority of Democrats for
30 the next two years, and provides the opportunity for the first time since
31 2010 for passage of labor law reform:

32 **RESOLVED, that the American Federation of Teachers go on**
33 **record in support of the PRO Act, share information about the**
34 **PRO Act with its locals and allies within the community, and work**
35 **with the labor movement to support its passage.**

- Adopted Adopted as Amended Defeated Tabled
 Precluded by _____ Referred to _____

28. SCHOOL/COMMUNITY VIOLENCE: A NATIONAL CRISIS

Committee recommends concurrence as amended below:

1 WHEREAS, violence, anger and disruptive behaviors are harmfully
2 infecting our students/children; and

3 WHEREAS, it is critical that we realize that the resulting and too
4 often fatal incidents in our schools and on our school grounds are
5 occurring across the United States; and

6 WHEREAS, this is a national crisis involving the well-being of our
7 children that must immediately be addressed by the president and
8 Congress of the United States as well as other relevant agencies:

9 **RESOLVED, that the American Federation of Teachers will take**
10 **the following action(s):**

11 **Seek through correspondence, email, petitioning and other**
12 **appropriate methods, the support of state and federal legislators,**
13 **and all other critical people and organizations, to ensure safety in**
14 **our schools (which extends into the communities) for the**
15 **following:**

- 16 • **Earmarked federal funding for school counselors, school**
17 **psychologists, school social workers, school attendance**
18 **teachers, etc., with a defined caseload, e.g., 120/1.**
- 19 • **Earmarked federal funding to provide sufficient security**
20 **personnel who will also be trained to gain the confidence of**
21 **students to relate any concerns.**
- 22 • **Earmarked federal funding for community organizations that**
23 **have experience working with students to prevent acts of**
24 **violence and disruption.**
- 25 • **Earmarked federal funding to provide additional security**
26 **measures for any district/school that needs them, without**
27 **taking away from students' other educational needs**
28 **programs.**
- 29 • **De-escalating techniques for all staff and parents-, including**
30 **restorative justice practices.**

- 31 • **Other critical school security needs identified by a school**
32 **district and its school staff.**

Adopted Adopted as Amended Defeated Tabled
 Precluded by _____ Referred to _____

29. ESTABLISH HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEES

Committee recommends concurrence.

1 WHEREAS, the American Federation of Teachers recognizes that
2 every teacher, professor, nurse and health professional, public
3 employee, and paraprofessional and school-related personnel
4 deserves a safe and healthful workplace free of known dangers; and
5 WHEREAS, AFT members face occupational safety and health
6 hazards, such as infectious diseases, indoor air pollution, workplace
7 violence and ergonomic problems every day; and
8 WHEREAS, occupational safety and health hazards kill and disable
9 more than 100,000 workers each year—on average 5,000 from
10 traumatic injuries and an estimated 95,000 from occupational
11 diseases; and
12 WHEREAS, despite having some of the most dangerous jobs in our
13 society, over 8 million public employees throughout the United States
14 still lack coverage under the Occupational Safety and Health Act; and
15 WHEREAS, even though the AFT has the one of largest health and
16 safety programs of all labor unions, 1.7 million-member trainers add
17 essential capacity to AFT health and safety education and training
18 programs; and
19 WHEREAS, establishing a workplace health and safety committee
20 is one way the union can involve members with implementing and
21 improving working conditions as an effective committee can help
22 prevent injury and illnesses on the job; increase awareness of health
23 and safety issues among workers, supervisors and managers; and
24 develop a culture of safety to make the work environment safe and
25 healthy; and
26 WHEREAS, health and safety committees keep day-to-day watch
27 on work-site conditions, identifying and solving problems before they
28 become serious; and
29 WHEREAS, just as local unions create committees for contract
30 enforcement, political action and other activities, workers benefit from
31 a union-only committee of members who develop experience in
32 handling health and safety matters; and
33 WHEREAS, a union-only health and safety committee can inform
34 health and safety work in joint labor-management committees,
35 resulting in more meaningful advocacy that results in safer work, fewer
36 incidents of workplace illness and injuries, and possibly saves lives:

37 **RESOLVED**, that the American Federation of Teachers will
38 support affiliates that renew their commitment to enhancing
39 existing health and safety committees, and to create a union
40 health and safety committee where they do not exist; and

41 **RESOLVED**, that the AFT will develop resources for health and
42 safety missions that develop and promote a healthy and safe
43 environment for all employees and the communities we serve, and
44 that includes key activities that include, but are not limited to, the
45 following:

- 46 • Identify unsafe work practices and conditions and suggest
47 appropriate remedies.
- 48 • Conduct health and safety inspections of both operations
49 and facilities, identify safety and health hazards, and
50 recommend corrective measures.
- 51 • Review accident/incident reports. Types of accidents,
52 causes and trends will be identified, and appropriate
53 corrective action suggested.
- 54 • Obtain and analyze available data on past injuries and
55 illnesses, and identify trends and suggest appropriate
56 corrective actions.
- 57 • Assist in the development and implementation of effective
58 health and safety awareness programs.
- 59 • Encourage feedback from all individuals about health and
60 safety-related ideas, problems and solutions.
- 61 • Develop written programs to ensure compliance with
62 Occupational Safety and Health Administration health and
63 safety regulations.
- 64 • Serve as an advisory body to management on health and
65 safety issues.
- 66 • Provide suggestions and recommendations for resolution of
67 health and safety concerns.

Adopted Adopted as Amended Defeated Tabled
 Precluded by _____ Referred to _____

**30. SUPPORT THE REINSTATEMENT OF NICOLE
 CONAWAY AND DEFEND ADA PROTECTIONS FOR
 TEACHERS AND STAFF DURING THIS ONGOING
 PANDEMIC**

Committee recommends referral to Executive Council.

1 WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic is still an ongoing threat to
2 public health, with schools as the leading source of community spread.
3 New and dangerous variants are constantly evolving and bypassing

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4 vaccinations. The COVID-19 death toll has surpassed 6 million people,
5 and it has surpassed 1 million in the U.S. alone. Despite these very real
6 dangers, especially to those with underlying health conditions, COVID-
7 19 protections in schools and communities are being lifted without
8 adequate review and concurrence; and

9 WHEREAS, Detroit Federation of Teachers member Nicole
10 Conaway is an excellent, highly effective science teacher and a
11 committed outspoken advocate for teachers and students. Despite
12 clear documentation from her doctor ordering her to work from home
13 to protect her health from COVID-19 in light of her medical condition,
14 Sister Conaway was denied Americans with Disabilities Act
15 accommodations by the Detroit Public Schools Community District.
16 DPSCD subsequently terminated her in retaliation for asserting her
17 rights under the law to seek Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
18 accommodations. Conaway and similarly situated teachers have
19 received support from the Detroit Federation of Teachers (DFT); and

20 WHEREAS, ADA accommodations and the Family and Medical
21 Leave Act (FMLA) are protections that were won out of the labor and
22 civil rights movement to protect the health of workers. In the middle of
23 the historic catastrophe of the COVID-19 pandemic, the DPSCD and
24 other school district administrations are treating these protections for
25 workers as weapons to discipline workers and force them into unsafe
26 working conditions. Nicole Conaway's case is one in a series of cases
27 in which districts have tried to get away with denying ADA and FMLA,
28 terminating workers for not returning to work, even when their physician
29 has said they are not clear to return to in-person work; and

30 WHEREAS, if the Detroit school district is able to get away with this
31 unlawful termination of Conaway, it will have dire consequences for all
32 teachers and school support staff who are trying to stay safe from
33 COVID-19 and apply for any accommodation or FMLA for a health
34 condition or disability. The repercussions could spill over into school
35 districts arbitrarily violating the rights of any staff or student with
36 disabilities for any reason; and

37 WHEREAS, if Nicole Conaway and other educators are able to
38 prevail in their struggles to keep their jobs and receive ADA
39 accommodations, all educators' and students' rights will be affirmed
40 and far more protected. In the middle of a continued worldwide
41 pandemic, which continues to change and requires far more intensive
42 study, protecting our most vulnerable union members and loved ones
43 is essential; and

44 WHEREAS, nationally, more than 575,000 teachers have left the
45 workforce during the pandemic. No one should be made to choose
46 between their livelihood and their health and safety. *None of us are*
47 *disposable:*

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48 **RESOLVED, that the American Federation of Teachers will**
49 **stand with our DFT sister Nicole Conaway to demand her**
50 **immediate reinstatement and her right to receive**
51 **accommodations under ADA; and**

52 **RESOLVED, that the AFT president will send a letter of support**
53 **to the Detroit Public School Community District expressing our**
54 **support for Conaway’s reinstatement and for her and other**
55 **educators’ lawful right to ADA accommodations.**

- Adopted Adopted as Amended Defeated Tabled
 Precluded by _____ Referred to _____