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Resolution to Defend the Boston School Bus Drivers' Union

Whereas, the Boston School Bus Drivers Union, United Steel Workers Local 8751, represents a 900-strong workforce of mostly Haitian, Cape Verdean and African American women and men. Their current employer, Veolia Corp. – notorious for its anti-union practices - has been hired by the city of Boston to break this fightback-oriented union and impose austerity cuts in public education; and

Whereas, these dedicated workers, whose days start before the sun comes up and who safely transport Boston's most precious cargo to school day in and day out, are fighting for their lives and need our solidarity; and

Whereas, as it has done with every union contract from Arizona to Sweden, from day one Veolia has violated almost every provision of Local 8751's collective bargaining agreement. In October 2013, Veolia responded to a request by union workers to meet by locking them out, falsely accusing the union of leading a "wildcat strike" and using that as an excuse to fire four of the union's leaders; and

Whereas, at the heart of this struggle is the war Veolia is waging on the hard-won wages, rights and benefits the union has won over 40 years. The contract is the envy of transportation unions across the country, and the company has declared war on every provision, including how payment is decided, seniority rights, sick leave, disability, health insurance, grievance procedures -- even the "all past rights and practices" section of the contract; and

Whereas, the union is fighting back. On June 30, last day of the current collective bargaining agreement, hundreds of union members and supporters participated in a Solidarity Day march, ending with a members' contract briefing in the Drivers' Room at the Veolia Freeport bus yard. The contract specifically states all union officials have unlimited access to the property for conducting union business. But Veolia cooked up a series of trumped-up felony charges against grievance chair Steve Kirschbaum, effectively seeking to criminalize union activity. Fortunately there were dozens of witnesses, who have given sworn statements that the bogus charges against him never happened; and

Whereas, along with the attempt to bust the union, Veolia is complicit in the re-segregation of Boston's public schools, seeking to dismantle African-American and Latino students' access to equal quality education via busing, initially mandated by federal court order. Court-mandated busing is just one aspect of the \$100 million in austerity cuts students are facing; and

Whereas, Local 8751 has a long, proud history of struggle. It was born under a hail of rocks and bottles thrown by racist mobs in the struggle to desegregate Boston's schools -- and has consistently fought for the broader interests of the working class in addition to wages and benefits of its members. From fighting for LGBTQ rights, to the anti-apartheid campaign, to the fight to keep Boston post offices open, this union has always walked the walk when it comes to solidarity.

Whereas, United Steel Workers International, Massachusetts AFL-CIO, Greater Boston Labor Council, Coalition for Equal Quality Education, Black Educators Alliance, and scores of others are standing in solidarity with Local 8751 to defeat Veolia's union-busting and targeting of union leaders, and defend the union contract,

Therefore be it Resolved, that the San Francisco Labor Council join United Steel Workers International, Massachusetts AFL-CIO, Greater Boston Labor Council and local community organizations in demanding that Veolia rehire fired union leaders Garry Murchison, Steve Kirschbaum, Steve Gillis and Andre Francois; that Veolia honor the terms of the union contract and honor their contract with the City of Boston; and that the Boston District Attorney drop the false frame-up charges against union co-founder and grievance chair Steve Kirschbaum.

Submitted by UTU 1741 and adopted unanimously by the San Francisco Labor Council on August 11, 2014.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tim Paulson", written over a horizontal line.

Tim Paulson
Executive Director

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