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United for Quality Care

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**VIA EMAIL:** [R.Subramanian@unison.co.uk](mailto:R.Subramanian@unison.co.uk)

January 24, 2019

Ravi Subramanian, West Midlands Regional Secretary  
**UNISON West Midlands**  
24 Livery Street  
Birmingham  
B3 2PA  
UK

Dear Brother Ravi,

Leaders of the United Homecare Workers of Pennsylvania (UHWP) in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh have discussed with concern the ongoing struggle of UNISON Birmingham homecare union members in conflict with the Birmingham City Council. The leaders of UHWP took several photographs to show their support and asked me to convey them to you and the UNISON Birmingham homecare members. On behalf of Pennsylvania homecare activists and the forty five thousand healthcare and homecare workers represented by SEIU Healthcare Pennsylvania, I write to convey how inspired we are by the struggle of homecare workers in Birmingham.

Homecare workers in Pennsylvania know what it's like to be in a long fight for social and economic justice. Across ten years and three successive administrations of Governors, homecare workers have organized to be heard. In our state, homecare workers were excluded from both our federal labor law covering private sector workers and also the state law extending collective bargaining rights to public employees. This meant that over twenty thousand homecare workers, mostly low paid women and disproportionately women of color, had no right to organize as a union and advocate together for improvements. To win, we had to defeat a right wing anti-worker Governor and vote for a change. Then, when homecare workers finally could hold a vote to choose UHWP as their representative, a foundation backed by powerful right wing business interests brought legal action to prevent homecare workers forming their union. Last year, the state Supreme Court vindicated the rights of homecare workers. At last, homecare workers can build an organization of their own. Throughout a decade of struggle, even when the future of UHWP seemed in doubt, Pennsylvania homecare worker leaders acted like a union. They have met and planned, marched and rallied, and brought their demands to the offices of legislators and Governors. This dedication and activism is the rock on which we build our union.

~OVER~

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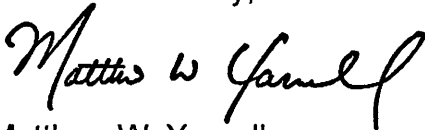
When we learned that Birmingham City Council is cutting care hours and effectively slashing wages for homecare workers, we recognized your fight as our fight. As a former long term care worker myself, I know how important it is to the people who are aging or who have disabilities to have access to dedicated, trained care givers. The members of our union understand the heartbreak of trying to make ends meet when management won't invest in family supporting wages.

It's shameful when any employer tries to balance the books on the backs of workers and the most vulnerable people in need of care. However, for a supposedly progressive City Council led by people from our own labor movement to treat homecare workers in this way is outrageous. We are so proud of your campaign of strike action and community outreach to turn up the heat on the unresponsive and irresponsible Birmingham City Council Cabinet. In the UK as in the USA, no matter what party is in the majority, we as workers and trade unionists must always be ready to speak up and be the voice of care givers and those who receive care. It's up to us to hold those in power to account.

As you carry on this fight, know that across the Atlantic Ocean there are homecare workers and healthcare workers who stand with you and cheer you on to victory.

Please share our warm feelings of unity and friendship with all the UNISON Birmingham homecare comrades. Do not hesitate to call on us if we can help you in any way.

Yours in Solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matthew W. Yarnell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Matthew W. Yarnell  
President, SEIU Healthcare Pennsylvania

MY:sif

cc: File (2)