

A Call to Solidarity and Action for Our Shared Future

25 november 2024

To the part time lecturers (PTLs) at Tufts University,

We're writing to you as colleagues and as people who care deeply about the future we all share. Our country stands at a perilous juncture with an intensifying rightward shift and looming threats from authoritarianism. This moment demands grassroots engagement and a reawakening of civic action. We cannot rely on political parties that prioritize corporate contributions, media consulting and incremental gains to protect us; these strategies have repeatedly failed to address the deepening crises that affect us all. Real change starts from the ground up, driven by those who see firsthand the impact of inaction on our communities.

Decades of choices that prioritize corporate donors and sideline grassroots voices have left us with leaders disconnected from the urgent needs of ordinary people. We cannot wait for solutions from those whose priorities lie with the powerful. Now more than ever, we must show up for one another — standing firm to protect and uplift those most at risk.

Our communities present a unique opportunity to build coalitions across the political spectrum on issues that resonate with us all — including faculty, staff and students, irrespective of immigration or residency status. As wealth inequality continues to widen, we must challenge corporate power and greed, which drive this imbalance, and instead prioritize the needs of our communities. This means tackling rising rents, ensuring universal healthcare, protecting personal freedoms, securing workers' rights, and confronting the climate breakdown that continues to wreak havoc and strain our communities. These are not partisan issues; they are essential to building a fair, equitable society that serves everyone, not just the powerful few.

We must also confront the rampant, predatory capitalism that fuels today's growing inequality, empowered by prominent public figures who elevate authoritarian leaders and amplify divisive rhetoric. This unchecked form of capitalism emboldens racism, misogyny and nativism, drawing out the most corrosive impulses in society. Through unchecked influence and vast resources, these forces exploit social divisions and reinforce hierarchies that serve the few at the expense of the many. We cannot let these forces go unchallenged; confronting them is essential to building a fair and just society.

Our union isn't just about workplace issues; it's a space where we can leverage broader solidarity and channel that energy into our own communities. Though we are writing directly to you and our union colleagues, this call to action is about building a wider network of support. By organizing together, we

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learn skills, build networks and strengthen our collective power — tools we can use to drive change both within and beyond our workplaces. The connections and strategies we build here make us stronger, more prepared and more unified in addressing the challenges we face in our communities and society as a whole.

We have built-in opportunities for solidarity as Tufts A&S and SMFA Part-Time Lecturers, but true solidarity extends beyond our immediate circles. We must leverage our local union to counter the draconian efforts of higher education institutions that increasingly prioritize corporate partnerships and uphold the status quo for the benefit of university leadership. These initiatives primarily serve those at the top, embedding them further in the institutional hierarchy. Yet it is we, the faculty and staff, who keep these spaces running, care for students daily and remain truly on the ground. It is our collective efforts — not those of increasingly detached senior administrators and decision-makers — that will drive meaningful change.

As artists, educators and advocates, we are part of interconnected communities, and this network is our strength. Our work to build, question and empower — creating spaces for equity, creativity and critical thought — is essential in countering forces that seek to divide and diminish us. We must show up in our broader communities, organizing face-to-face with those most at risk. Digital signatures, open letters and social media alone will not suffice — we need people power, standing together in person and supporting one another. From this foundation, we can strengthen union coalitions across all Tufts units, building a wall-to-wall unionization effort that unites departments. Together, we amplify our impact, protect our members and create a stronger, more equitable institution from the ground up.

This is not a time for defeatism or resignation. We need leaders and movements that fight relentlessly for the rights of the people. We must prepare for what lies ahead, ready to resist with every tool at our disposal, because what is coming will be nothing short of destructive. We must never back down. We must never give up. Now is the time for courage, resilience and collective action. We build power when we stand together in solidarity and act decisively. Let us stand ready, together, for whatever comes next — to face it with courage, unity, and unwavering resolve.

What You Can Do Right Now

This moment demands action and there are tangible steps we can all take to build power and solidarity:

- Become more active in our union. Attend meetings, participate in organizing efforts and stay informed about ongoing campaigns and negotiations. Your engagement strengthens our collective voice.
- Become a steward and help recruit others. A strong network of union stewards ensures that every voice is heard and every department is represented. Encourage your colleagues to step into these critical roles.
- Support broader union efforts. Advocate for and collaborate with other SEIU Local 509 higher education units at Tufts currently in bargaining, including SMFA Professors of the Practice, Full-

time Lecturers and Engineering Graduate Workers. Building connections across units amplifies our collective power.

- [Contribute to COPE](#) (Committee on Political Education). SEIU Local 509's COPE is funded entirely by voluntary member contributions, as dues cannot legally be used for political activity. COPE is composed of members and is assisted by staff of 509's political team. At virtual evening meetings monthly on the first Wednesday, members interview and endorse candidates for the state legislature and municipal offices, make donations to endorsed candidates and to organizations that support labor values and [509's Solidarity Principles](#), and endorse state legislation, as well as ballot measures that align with our values. 509 helps draft bills that help our members and those we serve and works to secure their passage into law. All 509 members can attend COPE meetings, and those who contribute can become voting members at the third consecutive meeting they attend. Your voluntary financial contribution strengthens our collective voice and advances the fight for equity and justice. COPE members testify for legislation at the State House and canvass for endorsed candidates and ballot measures. If you want to attend a meeting, email Orlando Peña, the COPE chair, at opena@seiu509.org.

Together, these actions lay the groundwork for a stronger, more united community. The challenges ahead are significant, but by stepping up in these ways, we can begin to turn the tide.

In solidarity,

SEIU 509 PTL Stewards

We are not writing in capacity of any union position. The views expressed in this letter are ours and do not necessarily reflect the positions of SEIU or Local 509.