



HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Dear Members of the Harvard Community:

As you are likely aware, the University and UNITE HERE Local 26, the union that represents Harvard's dining services employees, have been negotiating a new contract since May.

The University hoped to reach a resolution with Local 26. We value these employees as integral members of our community and have ensured that their wages—currently an average of \$21.89 per hour—and benefits have consistently been top of market in Greater Boston and higher than the Cambridge living wage of \$15.04 an hour. Unfortunately, no agreement was reached before the contract expired, and the Union elected to initiate a strike action.

As the Union's work stoppage goes into its second week, I write to update you on the status of the negotiations and to outline the proposals the University has made to reach a resolution that allows us to achieve our two main objectives: (1) recognizing the employees' contributions to Harvard by providing them with wages, healthcare, and other benefits that lead the local and national market for comparable positions; and (2) engaging in proper stewardship of the University's mission to advance outstanding teaching and research by ensuring resources to support faculty, students, and staff across our community in areas such as financial aid, research, and other academic priorities.

Proposals

To date, the University has put several proposals on the table toward a resolution that would achieve these goals. The Union has rejected these proposals.

On wages, the University has proposed an increase that would raise the average rate for dining workers to \$24.08 per hour by the end of the contract. This is well in excess of the average hourly wage for Local 26 dining service workers elsewhere in eastern Massachusetts, \$14.61 for general service employees.

We also sought to address the Union's concerns that some of its members were unable to work over the summer because the majority of dining halls are closed. The University proposed enabling members to draw unemployment benefits temporarily—an idea originally supported by the Union. After Local 26 rejected that proposal, we offered summer stipends of up to \$250 a week to employees who are available to work during summer break, even if there are no open shifts. In other words, employees would be eligible for the stipend even for weeks during which they did no work for the University.

Local 26 has rejected this offer. Yesterday, they presented a counter offer that

effectively amounts to approximately a 22.5 percent increase in compensation over a four-year contract, including stipends of up to \$450 per week during summer and winter breaks for employees who are available but are not needed for work because many dining halls are closed.

On healthcare, the University has made no changes to health insurance for Local 26 members since 2008, even as costs have risen dramatically. To secure a new contract this year, Harvard proposed that members join the university health insurance plan that has been agreed to by unions representing more than 5,000 employees on campus.

Under the plan most popular with Harvard University Dining Services (HUDS) employees, the monthly health insurance cost is currently \$104 for an individual and \$281 for a family. These costs are well below national averages: according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average food service employee pays \$140 a month for individual coverage and \$536 per month for family coverage. [Lower-wage workers would also be protected](#) from higher costs through tiered premiums in which those who earn less pay a smaller portion of health insurance costs and co-pay reimbursements that reduce out-of-pocket expenses. More information about proposed changes is available [here](#).

When the Union rejected this proposal, the University offered an alternative: contributing \$25 million over four years for dining services workers to join Unite Here Health, the health insurance plan offered by Local 26 to its members. The Union has rejected this alternative and has refused to participate in any meaningful dialogue toward a resolution on this important matter.

We stand ready to continue to work with Local 26 and mediators to try to find a fair and reasonable resolution, but this will require engagement by the Union on these issues.

Looking ahead

HUDS is working diligently to mitigate disruption to our community members caused by the Union's strike action, and will continue to communicate with students and school-level managers about schedule adjustments and facility availability. The well-being of our students is and will remain an unwavering commitment, and we are grateful to the many individuals who have worked to ensure that dining halls remain operational.

We are deeply disappointed that Local 26 has declined to engage in a constructive dialogue. While any labor negotiation inevitably includes challenging issues, the University and its labor unions have always found common ground on the importance of good faith efforts to achieve a resolution that meets the needs of employees and the long-term strength of the University's teaching and research mission.

Even at a time of financial constraints across higher education, Harvard representatives have approached this negotiation with these goals in mind, bringing to the table proposals that would ensure that Harvard remains a leader on compensation for dining hall workers on wages, healthcare, retirement, and other benefits when compared to peers throughout the region.

Harvard deeply values the contributions of its dining services workers, and our proposals reflect that fundamental reality. To learn more about wages and benefits for Harvard dining services employees, please visit <http://hr.harvard.edu/local26>. Sincerely,

Marilyn Hausammann
Vice President for Human Resources

How does Harvard compare?

A dining services employee at Harvard makes more in 38 weeks at Harvard than someone working year-round earning the City of Cambridge’s “living wage.”

Earlier this year, the City of Cambridge set its living wage at \$15.04 an hour.

$\$15.04 \times 37.5 \text{ hours of work} \times 52 \text{ weeks} = \$29,328 \text{ per year.}$

The average Harvard dining services worker makes \$21.89 per hour.

$\$21.89 \times 37.5 \text{ hours of work} \times 38 \text{ weeks} = \$31,193 \text{ per year.}$

Harvard University Dining Service Employees starting rates as compared to local market

