



LOCAL UNION 12 NEWS

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Know Your Rights! Employee Safe and Sick Time

January 1, 2024 Employee Safe and Sick Time became Effective here in Minnesota. OPEIU Local 12 has been busy signing Memorandums of Understandings for the contracts that don't meet the minimum standards required by law.

This is a wonderful law that the State Legislature passed to help make sure Employers are providing adequate time off for Employees and their family members here in Minnesota.

An Employee is eligible for Safe and Sick time if they:

- Work at least 80 hours a year for an employer in Minnesota,
- And are not an independent contractor.



An Employee may use Safe and Sick time for:

- the employee's mental or physical illness, treatment or preventive care;
- a family member's mental or physical illness, treatment or preventive care;
- absence due to domestic abuse, sexual assault, stalking of the employee or a family member;
- closure of the employee's work place due to weather or public emergency or closure of a family member's school or care facility due to weather or public emergency; and
- when determined by a health authority or health care professional that the employee or a family member is at risk of infecting other with a communicable disease.

Safe and Sick time is accrued at 1 hour per every 30 hours worked up to 48 hours each year . During collective bargaining it is encouraged to include all sicktime in excess of the minimum standard set by the state as "Safe and Sick Time" for added protections for union workers.

When taking the time within in the Safe and Sick time Provisions the Employer cannot discipline for legitimate use of Safe and Sick Time. On the 4th day of a consecutive absence, the Employer may require documentation for the use of time. An Employee may self attest the documentation or request a doctor's note, however in most cases the Employer cannot require a doctor's note.

For more information regarding the state law, including the city ordinances which are already in effect please visit <https://www.dli.mn.gov/sick-leave>.

Member Spotlight: Kyra Longfellow, Education Assistant in ISD 622 Schools



Kyra Longfellow, Education Assistant, ISD 622

Kyra Longfellow is an Education Assistant at North St. Paul, Maplewood, and Oakdale School District, ISD 622. Kyra was also on the bargaining team advocating for her colleagues faithfully and diligently for the 2023-2025 contract.

As an Education Assistant Kyra is paired with specific teachers in their classroom each school year. Her favorite part of her job is spending her day with 3-5 year old preppig them to be kindergarten ready. Reading out loud to them is a highlight of her day. When asked what Kyra's favorite part of her job is she said, "I love making a difference and seeing the progress our youngest learners make between September and June each school year. It is also

hilarious when students assume we live at school!"

“I appreciate the camaraderie and support being a union member provides.”

Being an OPEIU Local 12 member has value for Kyra. She says, "I appreciate the camaraderie and support being a union member provides. I highly recommend all members of our organization participate in renegotiation of their contract when they expire. It gives you a voice." Kyra went on to say, "It forces you to prioritize what you would like to influence and improve. It also makes you an agent of change." Being a part of the union has cultivated relationships with Kyra's peers just for being in the union and working together.

Being a union member and Education Assistant isn't all Kyra does. Kyra also sells mini donuts at major sporting events for Papa Pete's Donut Company. You can often find her at Wild Games, Twins Games, Saint's games as well as local music concerns. Kyra and her daughter also give back by volunteering at Feed my Starving Children.

Local 12 feels lucky to have members like Kyra volunteering time to advocate for their colleagues and give a voice to their work place. Our members ARE the union and nothing is stronger than a worker collectively advocating for themselves. Our schools and children are lucky to have such wonderful employees with caring hearts.

Bargaining: How does it work?

If you have been a union member for a while, you may have contributed to bargaining in one form or another at one point during your career as a union member. Whether it's being on the Contract Action Team, the Bargaining team, submitting surveys, wearing a button in support of the union, and so much more.

Bargaining has rules that are written in the National Relations Act, both parties, the union and the Employer are responsible to bargain in good faith. Representatives from the bargaining team and the Employer bring proposals to the table to help improve the contract for the Employees and Employer. The goal is to come to an agreement.

How do we win a good contract you ask?

The answer is simple. Solidarity and involvement from members in any form! Doing something as simple as wearing a union button, or collectively wearing the same color shirt or union logo can do wonders to support the bargaining team that is at the table. Making sure your voice is heard through surveys put out by the union and CAT Teams is imperative to make sure important issues are discussed at the table with the Employer.

Other actions members can do with the help of their union leadership is to sign petitions, leaflet, get community involvement, picketing, and strikes. Be sure to stay engaged when your contract is up for information on how you as a member can help support your colleagues in getting the best contract yet!



Get to Know Your OPEIU Staff

Many of our members have had the luxury of not needing to form a close relationship to their representative outside of bargaining. But this is not to say that you shouldn't utilize your representatives with questions or concerns regarding your rights. Get to know your reps by reading this synopsis of who they are here!

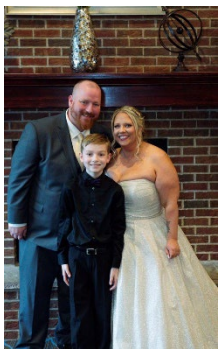


Molly Thul: Email: Mthul@opeiu12.org

Molly is the most senior staff member at OPEIU Local 12 and has hit the ground running trying to cultivate relationships with members to create a stronger union. Molly is a single mother of two: Logan and Allie.

Molly previously worked for Unite Here as a union rep and organizer and prior to Unite Here was rank and file for HMS Host at the airport where she worked as a waitress for 20 years and was a member leader and steward for herself and her colleagues.

Molly gets her drive for union work and passion for workers rights from her late mother who was a union leader for many years at HMS Host.



Kelsie Morgan (Anderson): Email: Kmorgan@opeiu12.org

Kelsie comes from rank and file as a previous HealthPartners Employee. As the newest employee at OPEIU Local 12, Kelsie has worked to improve communication and member involvement since she was hired

in April, 2023.

Prior to being hired, Kelsie served on the Local 12 Board for 4 Years and worked as a member advocate, bargaining team member and steward for herself and her colleagues.

Kelsie is recently married to her husband Eric and has a wonderful stepson, Liam. Kelsie grew up enjoying the fruits of collective bargaining with the benefits her father's Teamster's contract and Mother's SEIU contract which afforded their family a comfortable lifestyle that included seniority rights, overtime language, generous PTO, and health benefits.



Cesar Montufar: Email: cmontufar@opeiu12.org

Cesar came to Local 12 as a union organizer with past experience organizing the teachers in Southern California. Cesar, previously a teacher and devout advocate for workers rights amongst all social justice advocacy, has brought his knowledge, experience and passion to Local 12.

Cesar has been working tirelessly organizing members, educating members and staff on the importance of Contract Action Teams and other general organizing solutions to members issues. Cesar helped lead the Contract Action Team at MIA which is responsible for getting the best contract they have seen in their fifty-year history. Along with organizing new groups to join our union and teaching our members the importance of solidarity and a willingness to call out the boss's bad behavior.

Cesar and his Wife Heather share 2 beautiful children, Cecilia, Isaac and have also taken on the role of an informal foster parent to another daughter, Mary.

The Advocates for Human Rights Wins Public Recognition

The employees at The Advocates for Human Rights are celebrating a victory the non-profit world should sit up and take note of. Management at AHR did what few bosses do: the right thing. Organizers at AHR United brought management a petition signed by 84% of all employees and had management's voluntary recognition confirmed within twenty-four hours of going public. AHR management did what few others do often do- swiftly and opening recognized that rank and file workers are an organization's greatest asset.

AHR United deserves tremendous praise. The core organizers did everything right, from the word go. They built a strong, representative committee, they had fantastic organizing conversations designed to prep members for public support, and they engaged in solid inoculation to prepare for a boss fight, which ironically never came. Perhaps it's not ironic though, in that all that prep work might have helped the boss recognize that the union was a foregone conclusion, and that she and AHR would fare much better through cooperation.



OPEIU Local 12 members at AHR look forward to continuing in the spirit of cooperation and mutual respect as they head into contract negotiations early this year. The bargaining unit has already had a handful and meetings where they've discussed ways to get involved and brainstormed concerns, they'd like to bring to the negotiating table. With 20% of members already involved in the Contract Action Team, OPEIU Local 12 staff have no fear that members at AHR are ready for whatever comes next.

OPEIU Local 12 is excited for this new unit to join our union and work together in collaboration to improve the representation of workers.

If you know someone who is looking to organize with our union, please contact our organizer, Cesar Montufar at cmontufar@opeiu12.org

Congrats to Kim Frontzak!

Local 12 wanted to extend a huge congrats to union member, Kim Frontzak, who works for the Carpenters. Kim is receiving her Bachelor of Science- Business Administration and Bachelor of Science- Management & Organizational Leadership degrees. Kim is also graduating with both degrees Magna Cum Laude! Kim used the OPEIU College Benefit to pay for the schooling.

We at Local 12 are very proud and happy for our member and wish all the best in what her future holds!

You can learn more about the OPEIU discounted college benefit [here](#).



Dear Mother Jones,

I was recently disciplined by my Employer and when speaking to my union rep, they said that the Employer failed to meet just cause so we should file a grievance. What is Just Cause and how does my union rep determine if there is merit to a grievance?

Signe, Curious

Dear Curious,

This is a wonderful question that we get often from members when working with members around grievances.

As a union rep or steward we need to first assess if there is an actual grievance or if this is more of a gripe. That's not to say gripes can't still be addressed from employees and the union. It's just done so a little more differently.

First we need to know if the discipline has just cause. This is why it's very important for your steward or rep to take detailed notes in investigation meetings because this helps determine later what the next steps are. There are seven steps to just cause:

Fair notice, prior enforcement, due process, substantial evidence, equal treatment, progressive discipline, mitigating and extenuating circumstances.

Let's say for arguments sake your discipline was due to complaint from a customer in your work place. We may want to see if this complaint has any merit behind it. Did you admit to doing the alleged thing the customer complained about? Is there proof? We will ask the employer to listen to a call or review camera footage. Go over your answers in the interview. Review past disciplines at your employer related to the same offense to see if they are distributing the discipline fairly amongst your co-workers who have been disciplined for the same offense. What were the circumstances of this incident? For example, was the customer screaming and swearing at you and you disconnected a call? This is a mitigating circumstance as the union feels that you should be respected at work at all times.

If this complaint ends up having merit, you admitted to the alleged complaint, there's proof to back this up, other employees have been disciplined the same way for similar behavior and there is nothing that implies this complaint is justified. Your union rep may have to tell you that the union can not file the grievance on your behalf.

It's important to note what fair representation is. The union is duty bound to provide fair representation to all union employees but this does not mean that every issue a member brings forward is a grievance. The steward or rep is responsible for telling you what your options are when you request representation. Sometimes the investigation alone is enough to determine if there is merit. Other times, the steward or rep will need to complete their own investigation to ensure the investigation by the employer is sufficient. Each individual case is different.

This is not to say that you are left without options for something we would consider a "gripe". An example of this may be how management determines time off requests in your place of work or department. Perhaps they are following the contract, but changed a policy around it saying that you must give more notice in the time off request that is inconvenient for folks who previously only needed to provide a shorter period of notice for approval.

In this instance is it the responsibility of the members with the help of their rep or steward to organize around this to implement a change. Petitions, letters to the boss, a "march on the boss" with everyone demanding a change in the policy. Most of the time when the members organize internally to impact change, they get the best results. The union banded together as one is much more intimidating than one member and their representation going up to the boss demanding this. It creates power, and it is what makes a union stronger when colleagues have each other's back.

For questions for future Mother Jones articles, email kmorgan@opeiu12.org



Membership Information

Important Dates

January 17 Member meeting
Register [here](#) to join via zoom.

March 13 Member Meeting

May 15 Member meeting

Member Dues Update

Union Dues Cap has changed for 2024, Effective on January 1. Union dues will have the same calculation it has had for years. The only change is the cap in the Dues which is \$59.00

In 2022, the board and membership approved a changes to the constitution that included the dues cap to increase to support the cost of running the union.

Local 12 sent out information to all employers about this increase in

This also included an increase to the Cap in 2025 which will be \$62.00. Please reach out to local12accounting@opeiu12.org or your union rep with any questions regarding dues payments and deductions.

Know Your Rights

If you or a family member has a serious health condition, you could be protected by the Family Medical Leave Act, or the Americans with Disabilities Act. Contact your union rep to learn more.

Reach Your Representative

Kelsie Anderson, Union Rep: Kmorgan@opeiu12.org, Molly Thul, Union Rep: mthul@opeiu12.org, Cesar Montufar: cmontufar@opeiu12.org, Devin Hogan, President: dhogan@opeiu12.org

Question or Comment?

Please share your comments about this edition. Send them to: nmills@opeiu12.org

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Receive text updates from your union by texting OPEIU to 97779. Message and data rates may apply.

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