

FEBRUARY-MARCH 2021

# PRESIDENT'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF SEIU 721



## **BOB SCHOONOVER ANNOUNCES RETIREMENT FROM PRESIDENCY OF SEIU LOCAL 721, WILL REMAIN AS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR.**

I am writing to announce that I am retiring from the City of Los Angeles and stepping down as President of SEIU Local 721. I would like to thank each and every one of you for giving me the opportunity to lead our union as we fought to make a difference in the lives of working people in Southern California and beyond. While I am leaving my position as President, I remain committed to our fight and will continue to serve as Executive Director of SEIU Local 721.

I joined the City of LA as a Heavy-Duty Equipment Mechanic in 1979, and first became active in our union during the citywide strike of 1980, when almost one-third of city workers joined picket lines. From there, I became a steward and rose through the ranks to win election as President in 2008, and was appointed by the Union's executive board to serve as Executive Director.

I am proud to have been a part of the landmark victories achieved by SEIU 721 members since then — from the caseload reductions and child safety reforms won by LA County Children's Social Workers in the wake of their 2013 strike, to our historic FixLA campaign, where we joined with community partners to expose waste and mismanagement in the City of LA and won major victories for the communities we serve through common-good bargaining.

Our union's leadership of the Fight for \$15 campaign produced historic victories for low-wage workers, while at the same time raising the floor to protect the hard-fought gains of SEIU 721 members in the public sector. Our movement, which began by raising wages for public workers in the City of LA and LA County, culminated in LA Mayor Eric Garcetti signing a citywide \$15 minimum wage ordinance. This important work set the stage for wage increases across California and the nation, lifting millions out of poverty.

During my tenure, SEIU 721 leveraged its standing as the largest public sector union in SEIU, and among the largest in the country, to lead some of the most dynamic organizing campaigns in the modern labor movement.

After 42 years' service with the City of LA, I am enrolling in the City of LA's Separation Incentive Program. Retirement from active service means it's time step down from the presidency and pass the baton. The SEIU 721 Executive Board has voted unanimously to name SEIU 721 Vice President Linda Dent as our new President. SEIU 721 Treasurer David Green will become Vice President of SEIU 721.

Linda's selection as President of our union is historic. The first Black woman to serve as President of SEIU 721, Linda is a fearless warrior for racial and economic justice for all. Her selection is a symbol of the change our union is fighting for every day. Similarly, David Green has fought tirelessly for public workers, and is one of the lead architects of changes to LA County's child welfare system. His hard work and dedication has won much-needed reforms to give Children's Social Workers the tools they need to keep children safe. At the same time, David has served on the LACERA Board of Investments, ensuring a secure retirement for LA County members. Congratulations to them both.

Oklahoma City Basketball Coach Abe Lemons once said, "The problem with retirement is you never get a day off." That's about how I feel right now. While I am stepping down from the presidency of SEIU 721, I will remain in the role of Executive Director. There is simply too much work left to be done.

With the end of Trump and a new administration, we have an unprecedented opportunity to move our agenda forward. We will fight austerity in local government through hard-fought advocacy for federal dollars, we will win vaccination and other protections for workers, and together, we will restart our economy and finally move the ball on racial justice and unions for all.

From the bottom of my heart, I thank you for the opportunity to work alongside you to make historic gains for working people. I can't wait to see what else we will accomplish together.

*Bob Schoonover*

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT FEBRUARY-MARCH 2021



**“SEIU 721 members have kept LA County moving despite the worst public health crisis in modern times.**

**You deserve a raise, and now you have it.**

**Your unity, your solidarity and your commitment to building a strong union has paid off.”**

**Linda Dent  
President, SEIU 721**

### LA COUNTY MEMBERS: NEGOTIATED 2.75% RAISE STARTS SHOWING UP IN PAYCHECKS!

Good news for LA County members! As part of our current collective bargaining agreement, an extra 2.75% step was added to salary schedules effective Jan. 1, 2021.

All Options-eligible SEIU 721 members will receive the additional 2.75% salary increase once they are at the current top step for at least one year.

Those members who already were at top step for one year saw the 2.75% pay hike reflected in their Jan. 29, 2021 paychecks. Others received the 2.75% increase once they reached the new top step.

The only exceptions are SEIU 721 members in the Registered Nurses (BU 311) and Supervising Registered Nurses (BU

312) bargaining units. Members in these units — whose salary schedules have 20 steps — will receive the 2.75% increase once they have been at Step 8 for at least one year.

Those BU 311 and 312 members who have already been at Step 8 or higher for at least one year received the 2.75% increase effective Jan. 1, 2021. It was reflected in Jan. 29, 2021 paychecks.

Remember this good news the next time shady union-busting outfits like the Freedom Foundation try to trick you by saying you can give yourself a raise if you just give up your union membership. **YOU ALREADY GOT A RAISE** — without giving up your union protections to get it!



## PRESIDENT'S REPORT FEBRUARY-MARCH 2021



SEIU 721 members at St. John's Well Child and Family Center joined with union and community allies to deliver the COVID-19 vaccine to nearly 500 vulnerable LA residents in the Westlake and Pico-Union neighborhoods as part of the "Labor of Love" event on February 13, organized by the LA Federation of Labor.

### Los Angeles Times

*We owe it to essential workers to demand racial equity for COVID-19 vaccines*

"We're asking the local government to step up to the plate, to the original plan [vaccinating frontline workers first]...We have folks that are going to work to serve the public every day, every night, 24/7, to make sure that services are rendered to you."

Simboa Wright  
Executive Board Member  
SEIU Local 721

### SEIU 721 DEMANDS RACIAL EQUITY FOR COVID-19 VACCINES, JOINS VACCINATION DRIVE AT ST. JOHN'S CLINIC FOR FRONTLINE WORKERS AND COMMUNITIES OF COLOR

At a pair of events in February, SEIU members joined Black and Latino activists and other unions to demand more equity in the distribution of COVID-19 vaccines and to help vaccinate vulnerable residents of some of LA's poorest neighborhoods.

"We're asking the local government to step up to the plate, to the original plan that the state of California had rolled out," SEIU 721 Executive Board member Simboa Wright told the Los Angeles Times at a February 3 news conference. "We have folks that are going to work to serve the public every day, every night, 24/7, to make sure that services are rendered to you."

SEIU 721 has been calling on Southern California governments to prioritize communities of color and frontline workers — most of whom are Latino and Black — for vaccination, instead of relying on a purely age-based priority system.

The death rate from COVID-19 among Black LA County residents is 50 percent higher than among white residents; among LA County's Latinos it's almost triple.

On February 13, SEIU 721 members joined hundreds of other union

workers and community allies to vaccinate frontline workers and residents of some of LA's poorest neighborhoods.

The "Labor of Love" event organized by the LA Federation of Labor, Labor Community Services and St. John's Well Child and Family Center delivered the first dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine to more than 400 LA residents.

Black and Latino community leaders and union leaders volunteered to take the jab for news cameras to promote the safety of the vaccine. Recent studies by the CDC and the Kaiser Foundation found Blacks and Latinos much more likely to decline the vaccine out of safety concerns than whites.

Outgoing SEIU 721 President Bob Schoonover and other leaders received the vaccination and encouraged frontline union workers to join them. Schoonover received his dose from SEIU 721 member Angelea Smeal, who is a Registered Nurse at St. John's Well Child. Smeal said it's been an honor to serve the community during the pandemic by administering tests, infusions and now the vaccine.

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT FEBRUARY-MARCH 2021



### CITY OF RIVERSIDE REFUSE WORKERS RATIFY NEW CONTRACT BY WIDE MARGIN

City of Riverside Refuse Unit members voted overwhelmingly to ratify a new contract and institute a dues alignment strategy that will maintain our union's strength on the job and at the bargaining table for years to come.

The new contract protects refuse unit members from the worst effects of the COVID-19 budget shortfalls while adding strong new language that protects our rights, commits management to a classification study and adds a "Me, Too" clause with the City of Riverside general unit.

The dues alignment plan brings Riverside Refuse Unit members into parity with other SEIU 721 members over time. Under the plan, dues would be increased in three separate steps and can't be increased unless members receive at least a 2% raise.



### OCCIDENTAL BARGAINING TEAM SAYS TR IS A SOLID FOUNDATION AND URGES YES VOTE

SEIU 721 members at Occidental College are voting to extend their current contract, which now includes a Joint Labor Management Committee, a grievance and arbitration process and union shop stewards. The online ratification vote runs through mid-March.

Allie Gordon, who is a Marketing Communications Specialist at the school, said she is proud of what the bargaining team accomplished through a year of negotiations and encourages her fellow colleagues to vote Yes.

"Showing that we are a united group will support our efforts next year when we begin our economic negotiations," she said.

Beatrice Gonzalez, Department Coordinator for Theater and Performing Arts Facilities, also supports the extension.

"I encourage everyone to vote and ratify our contract. It's a great start and a solid foundation for our union here at Oxy."



**“I encourage everyone to vote and ratify our contract. It's a great start and a solid foundation for our union here at Oxy.”**

**Beatrice Gonzalez**  
Department Coordinator  
Theater & Performing Arts Facilities



## PRESIDENT'S REPORT FEBRUARY-MARCH 2021



### SEIU 721 CITY OF HEMET WORKERS WIN STRONG NEW CONTRACT WITH SALARY INCREASES

After a long and contentious campaign, SEIU 721 City of Hemet workers secured a great new contract with salary increases.

We demanded a fair contract that recognizes the essential work that we do for Hemet, and the community agreed.

The contract includes a new paid holiday, increased employer health care contributions and three across-the-board pay increases:

- 2.5% retroactive to July 1, 2019
- 2.5% retroactive to July 1, 2020
- 2.5% effective July 1, 2021

The contract also includes bi-lingual pay premiums, tool allowances for some classes and other language improvements.

This victory is a testament to members' unity, determination and hard work, and belongs to all of us. When we fight, we win!



### VENTURA REGIONAL SANITATION DISTRICT EMPLOYEES SECURE CONTRACT WITH RAISES AND STABILITY

Solidarity helped SEIU 721 members at the Ventura Regional Sanitation District (VRSD) deliver a solid new contract with raises that puts the district back on track and ensures quality services for the residents we serve.

Members voted to approve the one-year deal, which includes a 3% salary increase and guarantees stability for members and their families during uncertain times. While we did not get a hoped for increase in Annual Leave, we will keep fighting for parity in the next round of negotiations.

The new contract includes a "Me Too" clause that will ensure members automatically share in any gains negotiated by other bargaining units during the term of the contract, which extends from January 1, 2021 through December 31, 2021.

The VRSD board voted to approve the agreement.

For questions, contact Coordinator Edwin Valdez at [Edwin.valdez@seiu721.org](mailto:Edwin.valdez@seiu721.org).



# PRESIDENT'S REPORT FEBRUARY-MARCH 2021



**"I love my job in Animal Services. FixLA and the Targeted Local Hire Program helped me change my life."**

**Tikoa Canter  
Animal Care Technician  
City of Los Angeles**

## SEIU 721 FOUGHT FOR TARGETED LOCAL HIRE. IT'S CHANGING THE GAME FOR LA CITY'S MOST VULNERABLE

Tikoa Canter loves her job with the City of LA's Department of Animal Services and the animals love her. As an Animal Care Technician, she feeds and cares for animals in the City's West LA shelter.

"I love working for the City of LA — it changed my life," Tikoa said. "I had been homeless for several months when I got hired. It allowed me to stay afloat, save some money and get on my feet. Now, I have my own apartment."

Tikoa is one of more than 1,000 workers hired through the City of LA's Targeted Local Hire (TLH) program, created as a result of the 2015 collective bargaining agreement negotiated by SEIU 721 and the Coalition of City Unions.

The TLH Program creates an alternate job pathway into City of LA civil service jobs via full-time, paid, on-the-job training for entry-

level positions for Angelenos from vulnerable and under-served communities, including city residents who are veterans, homeless, transgender, disabled, formerly incarcerated, or former gang members.

The TLH Program was a central demand of FixLA, a coalition of more than 30 social justice, faith-based and community organizations that grew out of SEIU 721 and the Coalition of City Unions' 2014-15 contract campaign. FixLA exposed that the City of LA spent more taxpayer money paying fees to Wall Street firms marketing municipal bonds than it spent maintaining city streets or providing job training for disadvantaged residents.

After three years of planning with community partners, numerous delays and the near demise of the program because of COVID-related budget cuts, TLH is alive and well and changing lives.



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On Feb. 17, Los Angeles rideshare and delivery drivers with the Mobile Workers Alliance held a mass "clean-in" at a DTLA Lyft hub, sanitizing their vehicles to protest gig companies' weak response to the COVID-19 pandemic and their refusals to abide by local safety ordinances.

Despite dire COVID-19 case numbers in Southern California and worker safety ordinances put in place by both the City and County of LA mandating that rideshare and delivery companies either provide PPE or reimburse them for PPE expenses, drivers report that little effort has been made by gig companies to comply.

Now, with new restrictions on the ability of local governments to protect them in the aftermath of Prop 22, drivers fear conditions will deteriorate.



## GIG WORKERS HOLD "CLEAN-IN" TO PROTEST UNSAFE & UNPAID WORKING CONDITIONS

## STEWARDS CORNER: GOOD PERFORMANCE EVALUATIONS PROTECT MEMBERS' JOBS

A Good Performance Evaluation (PE) can help you with a promotion, and for many of us, they are needed in order to receive a step increase and to keep our jobs. Just last year, we saw some employers make layoff lists and with some employers, a Bad PE can put you on a layoff list regardless of your seniority.

Our Shop Stewards have been standing with our co-workers, fighting for good PEs for years. Recently, veteran Shop Stewards that have taken cases through the Steward Development Program have been able to turn Competent PEs to Very Good PEs and remove negative management comments. How have they have been so successful?

1. Effective Shop Stewards read department policy. All of us work for departments that have a policy, whether a stand-alone policy or in a personnel manual, regarding what is allowed in a PE. Those rules must be followed by whoever writes our PEs, and we need to raise it when they are not followed.

2. Effective Shop Stewards asked members to provide supporting documentation. It's a good rule to remember that if we do not have it in writing, it does not exist. So, we need to back up our arguments with documentation that proves we are good workers and that disproves we are not performing up to standard.
3. Effective Shop Stewards read the union contract. Our union contracts have rules about what is allowed in our permanent personnel file, what is allowed in a PE and what options management has to improve performance before anything is written in a PE.

If you want help with your PE, talk to a Shop Steward, and if you do not know who your Shop Stewards are, call the Member Connection at 877-721-4968.

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### SEIU 721 Celebrates Black Leadership Past and Present

Our union celebrated Black History Month 2021 with a campaign of social media posts featuring past and present Black leaders, including Vice President Kamala Harris, Congressman John Lewis, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and civil rights hero Bayard Rustin. SEIU 721's incoming President Linda Dent said in a statement that it's clear now more than ever that the Labor and Civil Rights movements must work together because we simply cannot have economic justice without racial justice.

"The Biden-Harris administration has pledged to support working people by restoring hard-fought workplace protections,

dismantling white supremacy and helping workers win unions," said SEIU 721 President Linda Dent.

"We are hopeful and excited that this is a turning point, but we can't rest and leave this work in the hands of others. It will take all of us working together, having each others' backs, and calling out racism for what it is for things to change. This month, we highlight the accomplishments of African Americans, but this celebration is for all Americans because Black history is American history."



## PRESIDENT'S REPORT FEBRUARY-MARCH 2021



### CAPITAL & MAIN INVESTIGATING MONEY, POWER AND SOCIETY

Why Does USC Hire People Fired by the LAPD?

“Pointing to controversial hires like Foster, and alleged racial profiling incidents with students and locals, SEIU 721 is now organizing to replace USC’s campus police with an unarmed security force.

The effort is part of a six-year SEIU campaign to organize faculty, graduate students and workers at USC, the largest private employer in Los Angeles.”

## USC FORWARD COALITION DEMANDS USC ABOLISH ITS ARMED POLICE FORCE

Dozens of students, community members, clergy, and labor allies led a car caravan through South Los Angeles to the USC Department of Public Safety (USC-DPS) to hold a press conference demanding the university take immediate steps to abolish the USC police force and reinvest those funds in expanding scholarships for low-income students.

Our coalition, led by ACCE, Eastside LEADS, and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, called on the university to reallocate \$50 million from the current USC DPS budget to fund scholarships for 2,000 LAUSD students in the USC Nexus area, and to work with community leaders to develop an affordable housing land trust.

The caravan coincided with the release of our new report exposing how USC-DPS regularly hires former LAPD officers with a history of excessive force and racial discrimination complaints, allegations of dishonesty and misconduct, and officer-involved shootings. The most glaring example includes the hiring of LAPD Sergeant Peter Foster, who was at the center of a \$1.2 million lawsuit stemming from

racist behavior and pranks, alleging, among other things, that Foster gifted a Black officer a cake topped with fried chicken and a slice of watermelon.

In addition, the report highlights four other police officers with a record of documented misconduct allegations and officer-involved shootings and cites examples of the USC Police’s negative impacts on community members and students, particularly Blacks and Latinos, at or near the university campus and off-campus facilities.

Black Lives Matter LA leader Melina Abdullah joined the caravan at the intersection of Hoover and Jefferson to call on USC officials to abolish the USC Police force after decades of racial profiling in neighboring communities.

“If there’s one place we don’t need police, it’s on our campuses. We say cops off campus — right now!” said Abdullah.

This is the second time over the past several months that our coalition took the campus and called on USC officials to do away with the university police force, and it won’t be the last.

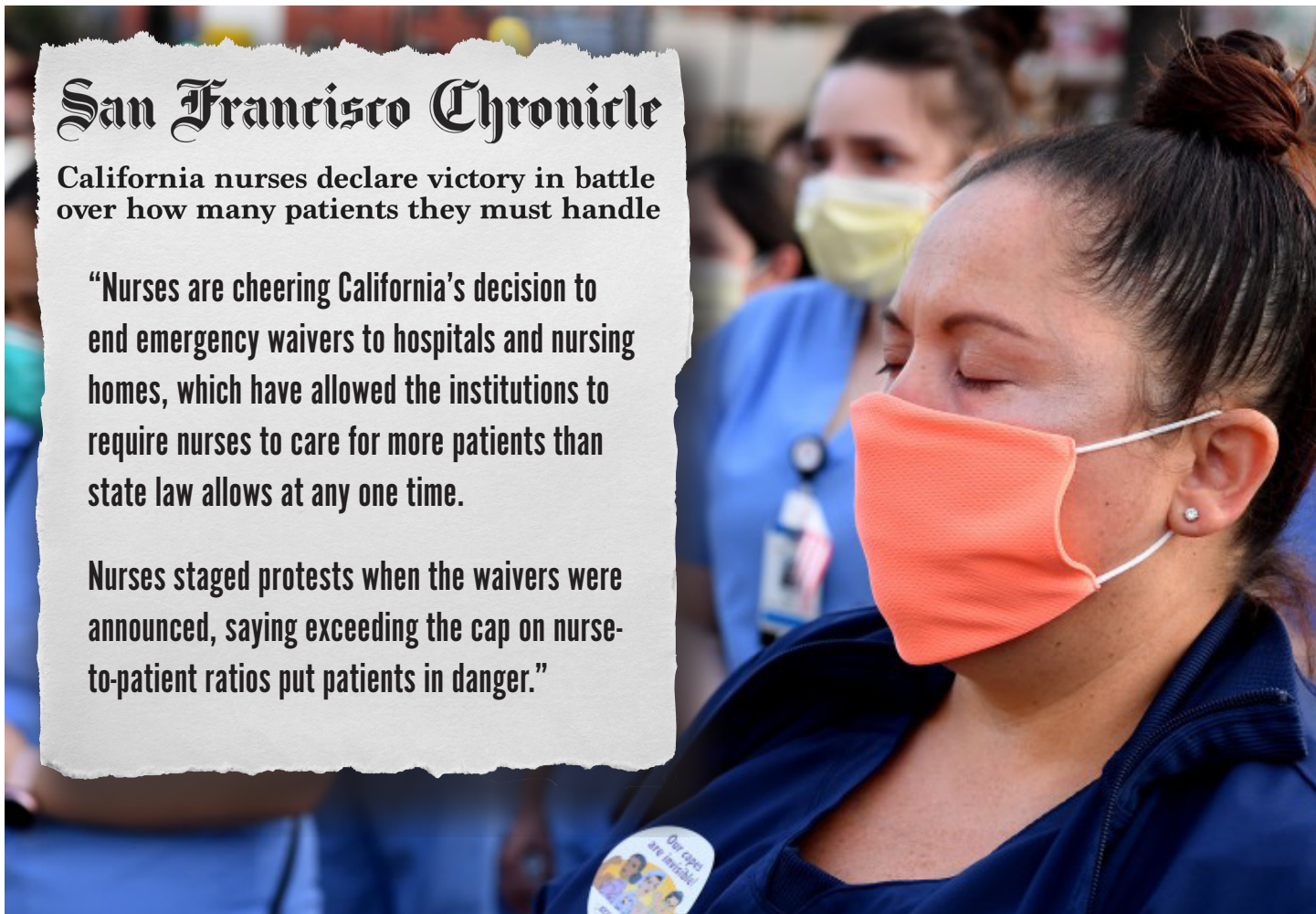
## PRESIDENT'S REPORT FEBRUARY-MARCH 2021

### San Francisco Chronicle

California nurses declare victory in battle over how many patients they must handle

"Nurses are cheering California's decision to end emergency waivers to hospitals and nursing homes, which have allowed the institutions to require nurses to care for more patients than state law allows at any one time.

Nurses staged protests when the waivers were announced, saying exceeding the cap on nurse-to-patient ratios put patients in danger."



## END OF 'PANDEMIC WAIVERS' IS VICTORY FOR NURSES AND PATIENT SAFETY



**"Congratulations to our SEIU 721 nurses for raising their voices to protect patients!"**

**Lillian Cabral  
Secretary, SEIU 721**

For too long, hospitals have asked nurses and other healthcare professionals to provide patients with high-quality care despite dangerously low staffing levels. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought this into vivid focus, as spiraling COVID-19 case counts outstripped ICU capacity and forced Southern California hospitals to ration care. But now there is hope!

The State of California recently mandated that hospitals can no longer use "pandemic waivers" to skirt nurse-to-patient staffing rules.

SEIU 721's advocacy effort with state healthcare agencies and the Newsom Administration helped secure this win and is tangible example of the value of union membership for healthcare professionals.

"I am glad to hear the news that we've finally stopped 'team nursing' or 'ratio waivers,'" said Lianna Boyajyan, a Registered Nurse at the Olive View-UCLA Medical Center.

"Now, I'll have more time for patients, and their families, to explain, to teach, to support, to give hope, to grieve — which has been nearly impossible so far during the COVID pandemic."



# PRESIDENT'S REPORT FEBRUARY-MARCH 2021



## MORE LA COUNTY FOSTER CHILDREN PLACED WITH FAMILY MEMBERS IN STABLE HOMES THANKS TO NEW PROGRAM BACKED BY SEIU 721 CHILDREN'S SOCIAL WORKERS

A new LA County Department of Children and Family Services program backed by SEIU 721 Children's Social Workers is dramatically increasing the number of foster children placed with family members in stable, supportive homes.

Designed to provide foster children with an alternative to living in foster homes with people they don't know, or in group care facilities, the Upfront Family Finding (UFF) program employs part-time and previously retired Children's Social Workers to seek out and recruit family members to care for children within their first 90 days in foster care.

The UFF program was piloted in ten of 20 Department of Children and Family Services regional offices with astounding results.

Nationwide, about 30 percent of foster children are placed with kin. LA County does substantially better, averaging between 40 and 50 percent placement with family members. By contrast, the UFF pilot in ten DCFS regional offices produced an impressive 81 percent placement with kin between January and June of 2020.

"With an average of 35,000 children under the jurisdiction of LA County DCFS, LA County's Children's Social Workers have heavy

caseloads," said David Green, a veteran Children's Social Worker who also serves as Vice President of SEIU 721.

"CSWs have to juggle so many responsibilities in the first weeks after a child is removed from their parents, it can be a challenge for them also to search for and recruit relatives. With the UFF program, specialized teams focus on recruiting placement opportunities with kin and the results are impressive," Green said in testimony to the LA County Board of Supervisors.

The UFF program reduces the dislocation caused by moving children multiple times to different short-term placements. Over time, it will help reduce the disproportionate share of Black and Latino children placed in out-of-home care.

A wide body of research show that children in foster care suffer less trauma, maintain better emotional health and stability when they are placed with relatives and able to maintain connections with siblings. Research also shows children placed with relatives are more likely to find permanent homes through adoption or guardianship when they cannot be returned to their parents.



# LINDA DENT AND DAVID GREEN: WARRIORS FOR JUSTICE



## LINDA DENT BECOMES THE FIRST BLACK WOMAN PRESIDENT OF SEIU 721. CHILD SAFETY REFORMER DAVID GREEN ELECTED VICE PRESIDENT.

**O**ur union takes on the biggest fights in the name of racial and economic justice, so SEIU 721 members regularly make history.

I am so proud that SEIU 721 has named Linda Dent as President — first Black woman to lead our union. I am also thrilled that Linda and the SEIU 721 Executive Board have elected Children's Social Worker David Green, our union's long-time Treasurer and an elected member of the LACERA Board as Vice President.

David and Linda are warriors for the causes about which SEIU 721 members care most: Protecting vital public services and the workers that provide them; fighting for racial and economic justice; and building a fair economy for all workers.

Born in Monroe, Louisiana, and raised in Compton, Linda witnessed firsthand the poisonous impact of racism on communities and how it chokes off opportunity for communities of color.

Linda has worked for the Los Angeles County Treasurer-Tax Collector's Office for nearly 40 years, and first got active in the union as a shop steward and on the bargaining team. Since then, her vision and relentless drive have helped deliver

a series of landmark contract improvements across our union, the \$15 minimum wage in LA City and LA County, the City of LA's targeted Local Hire program and the Compton Job Fair.

David Green has served as a Children's Social Worker for the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services for 20 years and has helped engineer landmark reforms, including the hiring of 4,000 additional LA County social workers to facilitate safer caseloads and the creation of a department-wide mentoring program for newly hired CSWs that has dramatically reduced staff attrition. As an elected member of LACERA, one of the largest public retirement funds in America, David is a powerful voice for protecting our members' retirement security.

I also want to recognize our outgoing President Bob Schoonover. Bob, you are a lion of the Labor Movement. I'm awed by what you've helped our union accomplish. I'm also relieved and thrilled you are staying with us as Executive Director.

**Gilda Valdez, Chief of Staff**



*Gilda Valdez*



**Digital  
Union  
Voices**

To prevent furloughs and stop layoffs, we need a #Stimulus4Workers bill from Congress NOW!  
To organize during a lockdown, we need Digital Union Voices. Text VOICES to 31996 today!