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September 16 2021
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the 3 million members of the National Education Association, who teach and support students across the country, we urge you to become an original co-sponsor of the Public Service Freedom to Negotiate Act, legislation that will give public service employees the right to organize and to bargain collectively.

We all depend on America's public service employees—nurses, educators, EMS personnel, custodians, corrections officers, firefighters, child-care providers, transit operators, social workers, and so many more—to keep our communities safe and livable. We often take the services they provide for granted, but their work is the backbone of our nation.

The pandemic has underscored their contributions. Educators, for instance, had to shift abruptly to online learning when school buildings began closing last year. They taught themselves how to use technology to guide the students they could no longer see face-to-face, constantly troubleshooting to manage the inevitable challenges that arose. School counselors—knowing that with school buildings closed, many students were without an important safety net—used email, text, Google Voice, and Zoom to reconnect and support children. School bus drivers delivered healthy meals to hungry children and their families, and school buses served as mobile hot spots for students without internet access.

The Public Service Freedom to Negotiate Act will ensure that educators and all dedicated public employees can:

- Join together in a union selected by a majority of employees voting;
- Collectively bargain over wages, hours, and terms and conditions of employment;
- Access dispute resolution mechanisms;
- Utilize voluntary payroll deduction for union dues;
- Engage in concerted activities related to collective bargaining and mutual aid;
- Have their union be free from requirements to hold rigged recertification elections; and
- File suit in court to enforce their labor rights.

The pandemic continues to challenge educators and all public service workers, making it clear that without them, no community would survive—let alone flourish. Yet, there is no federal law that protects their right to organize or engage in collective bargaining. Given that women accounted for nearly 56.2 percent of employees in state and local governments in 2020, and Black workers accounted for 13.5 percent of such employees, the lack of a voice in the workplace disproportionately harms women and people of color.

The right to negotiate collectively affects the lives of working people, the opportunities they can provide for their families, and their ability to advocate for the vital work they do. I urge you to become an original co-sponsor of the Public Service Freedom to Negotiate Act. To do so, please contact Stephen Coffey (stephen.coffey@mail.house.gov) in the office of Rep. Matt Cartwright.

Sincerely,

Marc Egan
Director of Government Relations
National Education Association