

How did MORE members organize for the UFT March Grade-in?

“In the Bronx, MORE members and co-workers met up in public parks and plazas. We graded, talked to community members about our contract fight, and connected with fellow UFT & MORE members in our areas!”

- Bronx Teacher Shelby S.

“Our citywide Fair Contract Day of Action was a huge success! Our NEST contingent made posters and brought our voices to Seward Park on Thursday, where we met teachers (and students!) from 4 other schools in the LES.”

- Manhattan Teacher Nina S.



GET INVOLVED IN THE FIGHT FOR A GOOD CONTRACT



Upcoming Actions:

- Tell Adams: *Care Not Cuts!* Monday, May 1st (6pm, meet at Whitehall N/W train station)
- *Fight Back Fridays* - Stay tuned for details

Use this QR code for text updates on actions & request copies of this bulletin!

fb.com/morecaucusuft @morecaucusuft www.morecaucusnyc.org

Feedback? Ideas for future issues? Questions? Email more@morecaucusnyc.org

The Rank and Filer Issue #2 April 2023 What's happening to our healthcare?



On March 27th, Michael Mulgrew emailed UFT members, announcing that GHI, the decades-old insurance plan used by almost all NYC public employees, would soon be replaced. While he assured members that healthcare would remain “premium-free” with “no diminishment of benefits”, Mulgrew didn’t mention the motivation for switching plans: to cut city spending on employee healthcare by 10%. Throughout last year, Mayor Adams had been claiming he won’t grant wage increases without healthcare concessions. Suddenly in February a “concession-free” deal was announced with DC37.

You might be wondering how a private healthcare plan could both save the city money *and* maintain benefits. You might also be wondering why a mayor who considers himself a fiscal hawk would suddenly cut a deal with an apparent lack of healthcare cuts.

In reality, concessions have already been negotiated. That’s what the change to our healthcare is all about. This is all part of a long-term effort by the city and union leaderships to save money at the expense of member’s healthcare. With the 2014 and 2018 contracts, union leaders and the city negotiated \$4.5 billion in “savings” (concessions). *continued inside*



These took the form of increasing copays and reduced service for GHI, and forcing first-year employees onto an HMO. This year, we have seen rising copays at CityMD (\$100!), Montefiore, and for radiology. Most recently, despite fierce opposition by retirees, the city forced all NYC retirees onto a lower-cost Medicare Advantage plan.

Union officials sometimes claim that healthcare “isn’t in the contract”. In fact [Article 3G of the 2018 contract](#) mandates the city to “pay the full cost of” health and hospital insurance coverage. But it also says that any “program-wide” changes to our health benefits will be retroactively added to the contract. Just like the DC37 deal, UFT leadership is using this provision to artificially separate healthcare concessions from the new contracts. This spring or fall we’ll likely get a new tentative agreement to vote on. The leadership will probably claim that it contains no healthcare concessions. Early next year, with the vote safely over, a lower-cost insurance plan will be pushed through, without any meaningful input from members.

To fight back, we must demand details about the healthcare changes before the TA vote. If those details aren’t forthcoming, or represent a diminishment in benefits, we should be prepared to vote no. We need to follow the example of the retiree activists who demonstrated and forced the city council to oppose the change in their health care. We should also sign the recent petition demanding that all healthcare changes be put up to membership vote.

Ultimately the real problem isn’t the UFT leadership or even our city employers. It’s a profit-driven healthcare system where rapacious insurers, pharmaceutical giants and hospital chains can price gouge and deny services. Instead of allowing the mayor to pass off rising costs to members, the union should follow through on its [2015 Delegate assembly resolution](#), and work toward passage of the New York Health Act, visionary legislation that would replace our privatized catastrophe with a public Medicare-style system that guarantees quality healthcare to all.

The UFT contract has been expired for over six months. This is disrespectful at a time of high inflation along with overwork and fatigue for all school staff. Students face challenges like never before and we are doing our best to meet these needs. Mayor Adams and the City of New York need to stand up, do their part, and deliver the contract school workers deserve.

WE DEMAND

1. Fair Pay

Inflation is 6.45% and another city union serving school workers, DC37, recently agreed to a contract calling for 3.05% raises.

→ **We need raises that exceed inflation.**

→ **We need additional base pay raises for underpaid school staff: paras, secretaries, OTs, PTs, and other such staff.**

2. More Staff

Smaller classes are now state law but NYC has avoided other state orders around class size before and is already claiming it won’t be able to comply.

→ **We need enforcement enshrined in contract to make sure the city doesn’t exceed the new caps.**

Students face myriad issues resulting from pandemic disruptions and years of school divestment.

→ **We need more student support staff: school counselors, college counselors, librarians, nurses, social workers, and therapists.**

→ **We need caseload caps for these workers in the contract.**

3. Protect Health

Our healthcare is being bargained away. Our buildings are old.

→ **We need to reject any givebacks on healthcare or other benefits, whether in the contract, or implied by the moves by the MLC to privatize plans.**

→ **Healthcare is a human right - let’s fight for a single-payer system with the New York Health Act.**

→ **We need a contractual checklist to upgrade buildings for the 21st century.**