

PRESS RELEASE

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CONTACT: Richard Stutman

617-291-2139 / rstutman@btu.org

Patrick Connolly

617-291-1971 / pconnolly@btu.org

1,500 BTU Members Rally for Teachers' Rights

City Councilors Charles Yancey, Felix G. Arroyo, Frank Baker attend and speak. Ayanna Pressley attends as well.

BOSTON – On January 18, nearly 1,500 members of the Boston Teachers Union (www.btu.org) rallied for an hour and a half at a School Committee meeting at 26 Court Street in Boston, which is the headquarters of the Boston Public Schools. The rally was intended to build on the surge of energy and interest that was demonstrated by the school-by-school event that took place on November 18, 2011 in which over 4,000 teachers and BPS employees took part.

“The...rally was by all accounts a celebration of the diverse strength of our membership,” said BTU President Richard Stutman, “which is united on our many core issues, not the least of which is that we want to be treated with respect for the important jobs we do day in and day out.”

According to Stutman, the school district's attempt to frame the dispute as one between the district and the union leadership “clearly has gone nowhere.” Stutman also noted the resonance the Union’s message of “Talk to Teachers” has had in recent months, both among Union members and in local media and government. As proof of this, City Councilors Charles Yancey, Felix G. Arroyo and Frank Baker spoke during the rally. Councilor Ayanna Pressley also attended.

“We are looking to obtain a contract that is good for our students, affordable to the city, and fair to our members,” said Stutman. “We are looking for no more and no less.”

BTU teachers have been trying to negotiate a new contract since June of 2010 and have often struggled to get the attention and respect of the school department and even of parents and other stakeholders. In the last 19 months, there have been approximately 40 negotiation sessions. While some progress has been made, especially in the realm of teacher and paraprofessional staffing, much remains to be done. as the BTU has been striving to garner attention and support, especially around such issues as the length of the school day, professional opportunities, expanding career growth, revamping and improving delivery of Special Education service, class size and salary.

In its continuing efforts to support members, the BTU has also planned a series of community meetings in February for members of the union and of the community. The

union has also hired a billboard truck to carry its message throughout the city for a full week.

“The purpose of these events is two-fold,” Stutman explains, “to explain what our position is on the various key issues in collective bargaining; and to listen to what questions the broader community has about our schools and how we can improve them.”

The Boston Teachers Union represents 5,500 teachers and other professionals including nurses, psychologists, and guidance counselors. In addition, it represents approximately 1,000 paraprofessionals, and close to 500 substitute teachers. It is the largest public sector labor local in New England.