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Lopez, Donna

From: Crane, Paula
Sent: Tuesday, November 24, 2015 8:21 AM
To: Lopez, Donna
Subject: FW: Statement at City Council meeting Nov 23 - Cristina Groeger

From: Cristina Groeger [mailto:tinagroeger@gmail.com]
Sent: Monday, November 23, 2015 6:08 PM
To: Crane, Paula <pcrane@cambridgema.gov>
Cc: Wallace, Ellen <EWallace@uaw.net>
Subject: Statement at City Council meeting Nov 23 - Cristina Groeger

Dear Paula Crane,

Here is the statement that I read this evening:

"My name is Cristina Groeger, I live on 51 Langdon St, and would like to speak to Order #3. I am grateful for your time tonight, and also grateful to the four city councilors who have already sponsored this resolution. I grew up in Cambridge just a few blocks from here, and now am a graduate worker at Harvard University. Joining me are Abigail Weil, Jack Nicoludis, and Niharika Singh, and Andrew Donnelly, also graduate workers.

As graduate workers, we have a variety of responsibilities. We grade thousands of exams given every semester, provide the face-to-face interaction in discussion sections, teach stand-alone courses, run lab sections, and carry out innovative research that brings in hundreds of millions of dollars in grants and contracts each year. Our work not only enhances the quality of education and research at Harvard, but also helps make Harvard a major engine of economic development in the City of Cambridge and beyond.

By providing quality teaching and research, we make Harvard University the institution it is today. But as conditions for graduate workers across the country have deteriorated, so have the conditions at Harvard which negatively affects the quality of the education we provide. Many of us are forced to scramble each semester to find a class to teach, sometimes outside our own specialty. We also lack any input in the quality of the healthcare we are provided, which the University has begun to make changes for other employees, and we have no real affordable dental option. In addition, the university's weak policies on family leave, child care and dependent health care, are prohibitively expensive, and often graduate students are forced to choose between having a family and completing graduate school.

With a union, we want to sit down with the University administration and bargain as equals over the conditions which we work. This includes basic compensation, such as healthcare and pay, but also basic rights like family friendly policies, the right to a safe workplace, the right to job security, and respect.

When Harvard administration is required to sit with us, they know they will not be able to justify many of their policies to the over 2,000 graduate workers. Because of this, they have come out opposing our right to organize. President Drew Faust did an interview last May, reposted in the Crimson in September, stating that a union would change our relationship with our advisors from an academic relationship to a purely labor relationship. But this has been proven incorrect. More than 60,000 academic workers across the US belong to unions, including the graduate workers at the University of Massachusetts in Boston, Lowell, and Amherst. The success of collective bargaining at these institutions shows that collective bargaining and academic quality can exist side-by-side. In addition, last month the Harvard Dean of Budget and Finance circulated a memo to all faculty, asking them to inform all graduate workers of the disadvantages of forming a union.

We find the Harvard administration's behavior deeply disappointing. We see collective bargaining as the fairest mechanism to ensure that we work together with the administration for a better Harvard. They should welcome collective bargaining and see it as a way to work collaboratively with us, rather than oppose it. With support of elected, public officials, such as yourselves, as well as other community and religious leaders, we hope to get through to the administration, and get them to recognize that workers having a voice is a good thing and that they should let the workers decide without threats, intimidation and misinformation.

We thank you for hearing from us, and urge you to support this resolution to support the graduate workers at Harvard and sign onto the letter of support we have circulated tonight. Thank you."