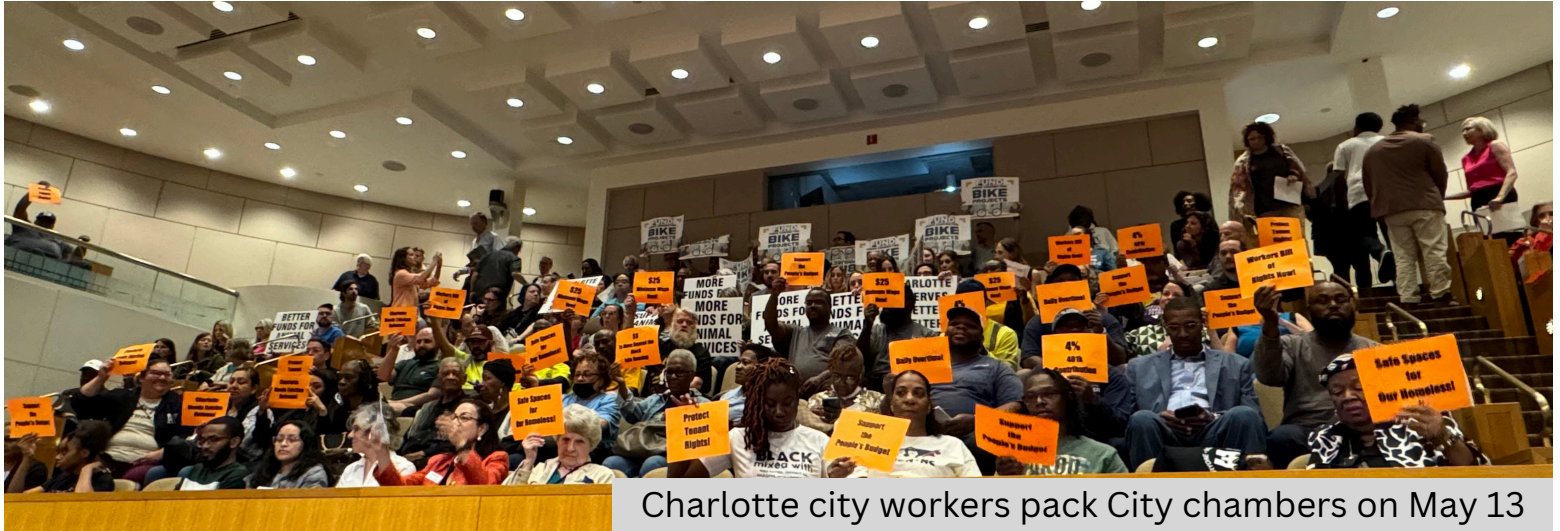




Southern Worker Justice

YEAR END REPORT OF THE SOUTHERN WORKERS JUSTICE CAMPAIGN



Charlotte city workers pack City chambers on May 13

City Workers Across North Carolina Lead Successful Campaigns to Raise Wages

One of SWJC's main goals this year was to raise the wages of all state and local government workers across the state to \$20 per hour. Our focus was on workplaces that have a Black majority workforce which includes 14,000 direct care healthcare workers at the state thirteen mental health facilities, 13,000 workers including housekeepers and facility staff at the UNC Chapel Hill and other state universities, as well as nearly 7,000 municipal workers in Charlotte, Greensboro, Raleigh and Durham.

Engaging several thousand workers, mobilizing several hundred to collective actions and training up over a hundred, we came very close to this goal.

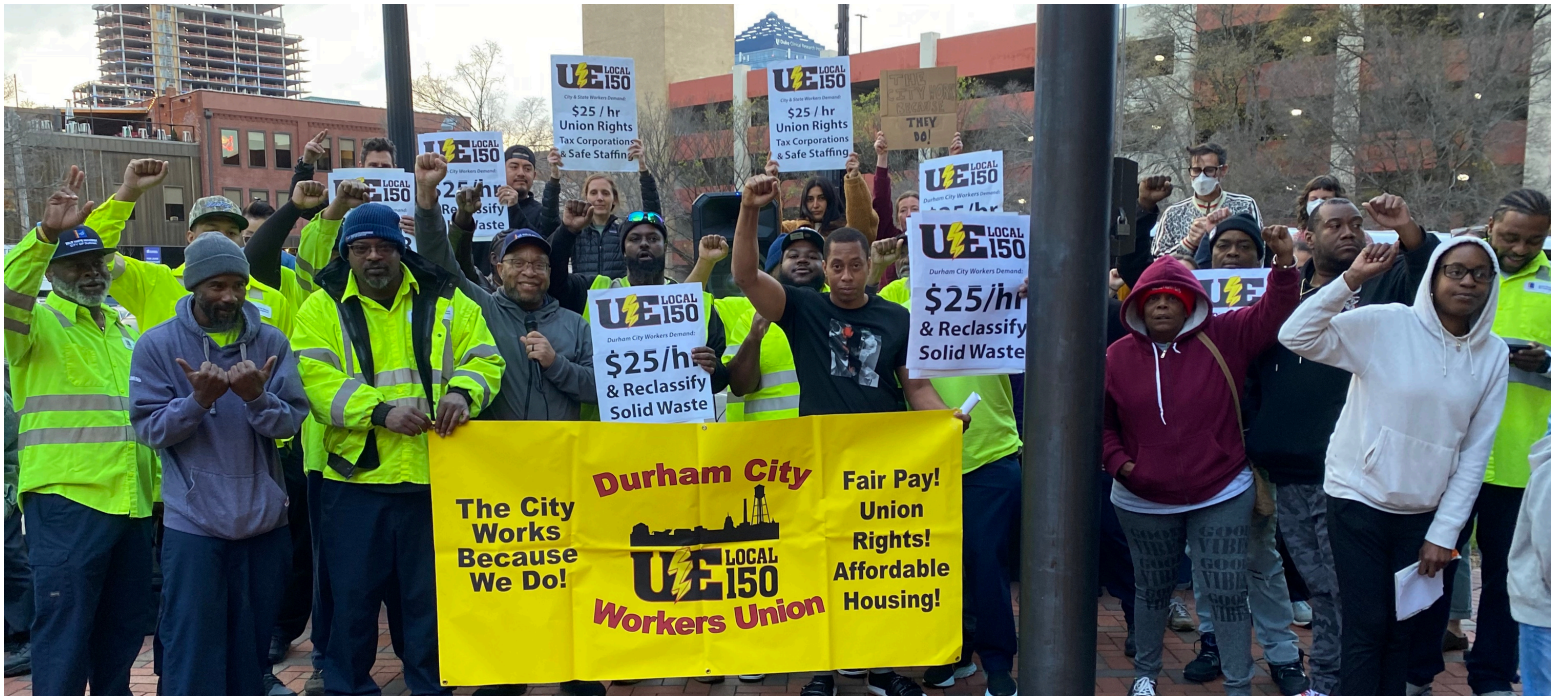
Leading the way, In Charlotte, while our campaign has helped secure significant municipal worker wage increases the last two years, continued action this year **raised the minimum wage to \$23 per hour**. In Greensboro and Raleigh, only a handful of workers will earn less than \$20 per hour when the new budget is approved. **READ MORE ON PAGE 2**



Hundreds of Workers Get Skilled Up with Targetted Trainings

Throughout the course of this last year, nearly 200 worker leaders attended trainings lead by the SWJC. Many thanks to **Chief Steward Craig Brown** for leading many of these training **MORE ON PAGE 5**

WAGE CAMPAIGNS (CONTINUED)



The Durham sanitation worker strike, which our campaign played a pivotal role in organizing, in September 2024, led to an immediate investment of **\$6.5 million in bonuses awarded to city workers**, the lowest wage earners (earning less than \$42,000) got the full **\$5,000 bonus**. A more full analysis of the strike can be found [here](#).

This victory catapulted our work among the 900+ essential workers in Durham to deepen our organizational foothold, develop leadership and build towards a much deeper campaign to win an actual wage increase, not just a one time bonus. This was launched with mass meetings of workers to develop a list of demands on the municipal budget. Workers also built relationships with key community faith leaders and won the support of Durham's three major citywide faith coalitions - Durham Congregations in Action, Durham CAN and also Interdenominational Ministers' Alliance. Over a hundred city workers participated in one of our

multiple actions starting in November 2023 through the final budget hearing on June 3.

Ultimately, the campaign **helped secure \$28 million in raises**, the largest investment in workers in the city's history.

While the minimum wage starting July 1, 2024 will be \$19.58, all current city employees will be making around \$22 per hour. Many of the senior experienced workers in sanitation and public works **will receive \$12,000-14,000 raises** annually.

We are also strongly positioned going into next year's budget cycle to win even more structural changes to the pay plan design, including awarding low wage workers the same annual increase as higher wage earners, as well as amendments to the city's Universal Living Wage ordinance.



DHHS WORKERS ADVANCE CAMPAIGN FOR SAFE STAFFING

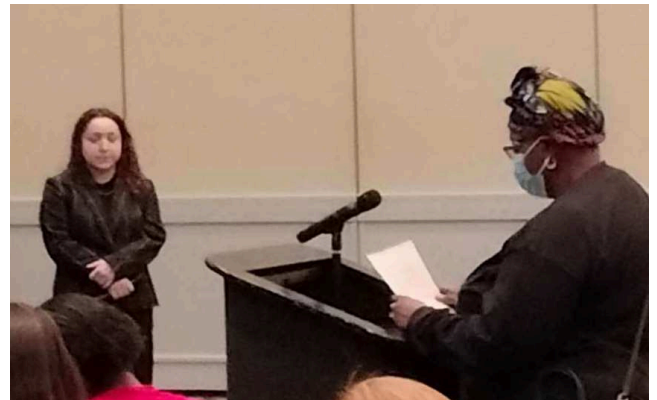
The DHHS Council similarly launched a major campaign for Safe Staffing which included demands for raising wages by 20% or to \$20 per hour minimum wage. In response to our agitation and news coverage around extreme understaffing and even patient deaths, the Secretary of DHHS organized a listening touring across the state hosting town hall meetings.

Our union had won a 10% premium pay for the understaffing faced by all direct care staff. However, when the 4% state salary increase became effective in the July 1, 2023 budget, DHHS decided to take away this 10%, resulting in a 6% pay cut, angering workers.

Our members were able to successfully attend and speak-out at hearings in Greenville, Morganton and New Bern. Union leaders confronted DHHS and key legislative oversight committee members on the major struggles on the job maintaining quality services and a safe workplace with sever understaffing. These ultimately resulted in a re-establishment of meet-n-confer with Deputy Secretary Mark Benton, who has now met with our members three times.



Sekia Royall speaks at Greenville Town Hall in February 2023



Patrice Jacobs speaks at New Bern Town Hall in March 2023



UE150 DHHS Council leaders meet with Secretary Kinsley in Raleigh on April 19, 2023



UE150 confront DHHS Secretary Kinsley at New Bern Town Hall in March 2023



DHHS WORKERS ADVANCE CAMPAIGN FOR SAFE STAFFING

Our members were dedicated to increasing our coordinated collective action across the state. In late 2023, the DHHS Council launched a petition campaign that was able to get several hundred signatures across DHHS and resulted in actions at Longleaf Center, Cherry Hospital and Central Regional Hospital. This petition demanded not just higher wages, but also holding management accountable.

Workers at CRH, in particular, had begun documenting and working to expose abusive management. These actions engaged many new workers in collective action. Several workers at Longleaf participated in a rally in the middle of the rain! Similarly, for the first time in recent years, workers at Cherry Hospital organized a delegation to confront their new CEO with the petition signatures. Workers then delivered the petitions in a meeting with Benton, continuing to expose that not only low wages, but also abusive management has led to the brain drain and loss of staff at key DHHS facilities, most notably at CRH, Murdoch, Caswell and Cherry.



Murdoch Center rally



Longleaf Center rally November 9, 2023



DHHS Council leaders meet with DHHS in March 2024



Cherry Hospital delegation to CEO, Jan 2024



HUNDREDS TRAINED UP!!



December 12, Durham, NC



February 18, Durham, NC



March 23, Goldsboro, NC



November 9-11, Charlotte, NC



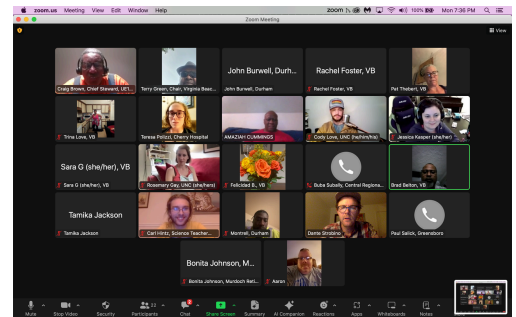
November 18, Virginia Beach



January 27, Raleigh, NC

Throughout the course of this last year, nearly 200 worker leaders attended trainings lead by the SWJC.

In the fall of 2023, we brought together 46 workers from across North Carolina to participate in a three part leadership development training. The first two sessions were held statewide on zoom, the third and final session was held in person across the region in Charlotte, Chapel Hill, and Goldsboro. Workers learned many skills regarding holding successful organizing conversations, developing an issue based campaign, public speaking and the qualities of a successful leader. Bringing workers together across the state across these industries has created more space for peer-to-peer sharing and learning.



July 12, Statewide Zoom

Over the weekend of November 11-12, we brought together 22 municipal worker leaders from Charlotte, Durham, Greensboro, Raleigh, Norfolk and Virginia Beach for an intensive two-day leadership development training in Charlotte, NC. The following weekend on November 18, we repeated the material with 11 additional worker leaders in Virginia Beach.



VIRGINIA CITIES MOVE FORWARD WITH COLLECTIVE BARGAINING, WHILE VIRGINIA BEACH REACHES STALEMATE



On April 30, the Virginia Beach City Council decided not to pass collective bargaining on a confounding 5-5-1 vote. This is disappointing but our fight is not over. We will win collective bargaining for Virginia Beach city workers.

Politicians always slow down the progress of the working class. The night of April 30 was another example of this. We ran a thorough and long campaign on the issue, dating back over three years. When it comes down to it, several people on council changed their votes and went back on previous promises and one council member, Dr. Ross-Hammond, abstained from voting for reasons that we are still unable to comprehend (although her meeting with the Chamber of Commerce in recent days may definitely have influenced her in the end).

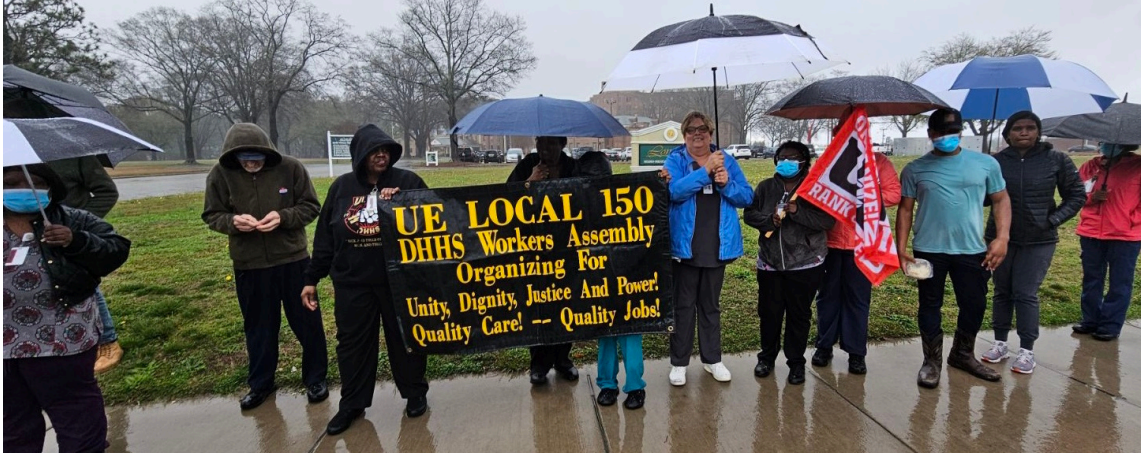
However, on July 3, UE members in the City of Newport News were instrumental in pushing the city to establish a Task Force for collective bargaining. UE members in Portsmouth also participated in a campaign that won a collective bargaining ordinance in Portsmouth last November.



WORKERS RALLY IN NEWPORT NEWS, JULY 3



PHOTO GALLERY OF WORKERS RALLYING ACROSS THE STATE



UE150 members at Longleaf Center in Wilson rallied on March 8 after DHHS snatched back an “overpayment”. Workers have been told they would be getting Labor Market Adjustments and a bonus, so expected this was their rightful pay.



Rocky Mount sanitation worker Arnie Jones speaking in front of City Council in October 2023 to challenge the Police receiving a 35% raise, while Solid Waste receiving 5% or less. Jones spoke out bravely at many council meetings demanding fairness.



Greensboro City workers marching on MLK day 2024



Charlotte Chapter meeting with City Manager Marcus Jones n May 6, 2024



UNC HOUSEKEEPERS CONTINUE FIGHT FOR FREE PARKING – WIN CONCESSIONS!

In the Spring of 2024, housekeepers at UNC Chapel Hill continued their campaign to eliminate fees for workers to park on the job. In February, workers wrote to the university:

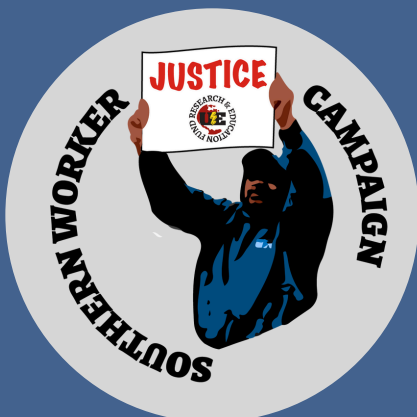
“Many employees received a double parking deduction from their paychecks due to university error. Many of these employees are in the lower pay bands at the university, and this error deeply affects their ability to pay their bills and survive to the beginning of the month.”



Workers launched a petition campaign, collecting nearly 200 signatures from campus workers and supporters (in addition to the 1,200 they collected in Fall of 2022). They challenged the UNC Parking and Transportation committee to take up their demands, to no avail. Then, on March 20, housekeepers and their allies rallied, spoke the press and delivered their petitions.

Workers learned that the new 5-year parking plan would increase revenue for the University by \$2 million. Meanwhile, their proposals to eliminate paid parking for all workers earning less than \$50,000 per year, would only cost the university \$1 million per year. Yet, the Employee Forum reps (supposed to represent all workers) on the Parking Committee claimed it was because of “equity” that they could not eliminate parking fees for some workers, and not others. The union had to educate them on the definition of equity!

After a few months of struggle, the union was able to secure a decrease in the monthly parking fee, putting hundreds of dollars per year back in workers pockets, but the struggle continues!



ORGANIZE FOR YOUR RIGHTS!

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The Southern Worker Justice Campaign is a 501c3 Project of the UE Research and Education Fund.