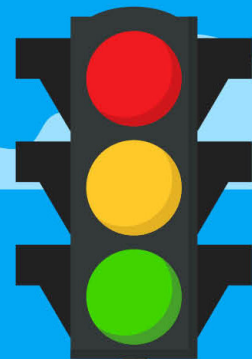


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2021 AFT MASSACHUSETTS CONVENTION
Safety • Equity • Transparency SAT. MAY 1

Table of Contents

1	2021 AFT MA Convention President's Report from Beth Kontos	14	UMass Dartmouth Unions are organizing together to avoid cuts, protect health and safety on campus.
5	2021 AFT MA Secretary-Treasurer's Report from Brant Duncan	18	It's time to give New Bedford's Paraprofessionals and Lunch Aides a much-needed raise.
7	Keynote Speaker Noliwe Rooks	22	Holliston Teachers Union tells School Board: Keep your promise, ratify our contract.
8	AFT MA 2021 Distinguished Service Award Recipients	25	AFT MA is supporting our public school Librarians during the Covid-19 crisis.
9	Massachusetts AFL-CIO 2021 Labor Scholarship Award Recipients	28	Stronger together! AFT MA members take action to stand up for education.
10	AFT Amesbury is holding down healthcare costs with healthy food, standing desks.	32	AFT MA Executive Board Members and Staff
12	Lawrence Teachers' Union gives away books, winter clothes, and school supplies at Mobile Food Market.		

Navigating the AFT Massachusetts 2021 Convention Report

- Click on any Table of Contents page number or title to jump to that story.
- Click on any URL to go to that web page or on any email address to send an email.
- Indicates story continues, click to go to next page ◆ Indicates end of story

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2021 AFT Massachusetts Convention President's Report from Beth Kontos



Safety, Equity, and Transparency:
Three themes that have guided
AFT Massachusetts' work
over the past year.

Over the past year, AFT Massachusetts members have confronted incredible challenges. We've faced a deadly pandemic that has disrupted our public education system, racial and economic inequities that directly harm our students and our communities, and governmental leaders who often don't respect the hard work educators do every day.

It's not an overstatement to say that we could not have made it through the past year on our own. But **by working together through our union, we've been able to achieve significant victories and the light at the end of the tunnel is now in sight.** We've fought for – and won – a voice in the school reopening process and greater protections for educators and our students. More and more educators are receiving their COVID-19 vaccines every day. With a new pro-public education, pro-union administration in Washington, our school districts are finally receiving the resources they need to start recovering from the pandemic.

We've achieved these milestones through our collective work as a union, and through our commitment to Safety, Equity, and Transparency: three themes that have guided AFT Massachusetts' work over the past year.

Safety

Since the COVID-19 pandemic reached Massachusetts last spring, our top priority has been ensuring the safety of our members, our students, and their families. Our work to ensure safe learning environments began long before this school year started. While our state government spent the summer focused on relaxing public health restrictions and reopening businesses, we convened ►

2021 AFT MASSACHUSETTS CONVENTION PRESIDENT'S REPORT FROM BETH KONTOS

educators and other experts to determine what was needed to allow the safe resumption of in-person learning.

In July, AFT Massachusetts, the Massachusetts Teachers Association, and the Boston Teachers Union released a joint set of reopening proposals for the reopening of our public schools, calling for a phased reopening process that included significant planning time for school staff to prepare for a new learning model, whether in-person, remote or hybrid. We successfully negotiated two weeks of planning time at the beginning of the school year, allowing local school teams to develop new virtual lesson plans, update curriculum, and prepare for the complexities of virtual and in-person learning during the pandemic.

Our field reps have done amazing work helping local unions negotiating remote and hybrid working condition agreements, and our legal team has helped ensure that educators with health conditions that put them at higher risk from COVID-19 can access remote positions or leaves of absence. We held numerous COVID safety trainings to help local leaders ensure that the latest safety guidelines were being met, and worked with the Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health (MassCOSH) to highlight the need for upgraded ventilation systems in our aging school buildings and libraries.

While we've been met with resistance from the Governor and state education officials, we've been successful at pushing for in-school surveillance testing, centralized tracking of COVID cases, and many other safety measures that



AFT Massachusetts President Beth Kontos joins US Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona at the Gallivan Family and Community Center on March 30, 2021. Vaccinating educators and school staff is critical to safely repopulating our schools.

would not be in place if it were not for our collective advocacy. **With an extra push from President Biden, our months of advocacy for educator vaccinations were successful at ensuring that educators would be eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine early this spring, and educators are largely able to be vaccinated as more students return to their classrooms.** ►

2021 AFT MASSACHUSETTS CONVENTION PRESIDENT'S REPORT FROM BETH KONTOS

Equity

Our push for safety is grounded in our commitment to equity because we know that the pandemic has not affected all communities equally. Communities of color and immigrant communities, including the communities that AFT Massachusetts represents, have borne the brunt of the pandemic, and our response must be centered around repairing that damage. The Black Lives Matter movement, and the fight against racial injustice in all of its forms, have highlighted the many inequities that exist in our society. We know that education plays an enormous role in creating those inequities, and must play a major role in ending them.

One of the biggest drivers on inequality in our nation is our school funding system, which leaves kids from poor communities in underfunded schools while their peers in wealthy areas have everything they need. That's why we worked to pass the Student Opportunity Act to deliver billions of dollars in new state funding to the highest-poverty school districts in Massachusetts, while ensuring that every district provides the same resources and supports to students. And we continue to advocate for counting all our students during the State's budgeting process.

The federal CARES Act and the American Rescue Plan gave our public schools and colleges the emergency funding we need to respond to the pandemic, but **we still need to make sure that the Student Opportunity Act is fully funded over the next six years to keep our promise to the Commonwealth's kids.** We're also pushing for the Cherish Act to equitably fund our public colleges so they can support the many students who lost jobs during the pandemic and need higher education to pursue a new career. The American Rescue Plan has money for municipalities and e-rate funds that can be used to improve our libraries and increase internet connectivity in our communities.

AFT Massachusetts is also active in pushing for equitable policies at the state and federal level. We are part of the Raise Up Massachusetts coalition that helped win Emergency Paid Sick Time this year, and the Poor People's Campaign for "Domestic Tranquility" policies like fair pay, childcare, and family leave. Currently, we are working with partners in the state to advocate that the American Rescue Act funds are spent in ways that support working families and that infrastructure improvements are completed with union labor. ►

We worked to pass the Student Opportunity Act to deliver billions of dollars in new state funding to the highest-poverty school districts in Massachusetts, while ensuring that every district provides the same resources and supports to students.

2021 AFT MASSACHUSETTS CONVENTION PRESIDENT'S REPORT FROM BETH KONTOS

Our commitment to equity is also reflected in the work we do to fill the gaps while we advocate for greater government assistance. **Over the past year, AFT Massachusetts and our locals held numerous book giveaways and food distribution events, because we know that a safe and healthy learning environment at home starts with food security, and that the ability to read at home is a resource that isn't distributed equally.**

Transparency

Finally, we know that all of our work is made more difficult when government lacks transparency. As a union, we constantly support efforts to ensure that the voices of educators, parents, and students are being heard when decisions around public education are being made.

This year, we've held several trainings for members who are considering running for office, because we know that there is no substitute for elected officials with real-life experience from our workplaces. We also know that engaging with our legislators is imperative to affecting change in society. To this end we are educating our members about bills that have been introduced on both the state national level. And we are joining them as they advocate and engage in conversations at legislative forums.

This winter, we held a book discussion to talk about the book *Wolf at the Schoolhouse Door* and strategized around the continued efforts of education privatizers to profit from our students. Our keynote speaker today, Noliwe Rooks,

reports a compelling historical analysis of the privatization and segregation of our public schools in her book *Cutting School*. We must continue to shine a light on the corporate efforts to privatize public education and work to put an end to it.

What's Next

We're so close to ending this pandemic and returning all students to the classroom full-time, and we'll do it by continuing to advocate for school safety measures: rapid surveillance testing, ventilation upgrades to prevent transmission, and vaccinations for educators, for our students' family members, and – when they are approved – for our students themselves. **We'll continue working collaboratively with school committees, parents, and students to overcome the obstacles to safely repopulating our schools.** And we'll start gearing up for the campaigns to come, like fully funding the Student Opportunity Act; ensuring that students get all the support they need to recover from the pandemic academically, socially, and emotionally; and passing the Fair Share Amendment next year to provide sustainable funding for our public education system.

We've gotten through this year together by relying on each other and our power as a union, and we'll keep moving forward through the challenges to come with the same approach.

In solidarity,

Beth Kontos

2021 AFT Massachusetts Secretary-Treasurer's Report from Brant Duncan



AFT Massachusetts has emerged from the past year's trials stronger, more united, and ready to face the challenges to come.

The last year was devastating; we lost friends, colleagues, and family members, faced the incredible challenges of remote learning, and experienced the difficulties of organizing without being able to gather together in the same room. While we continuously strive to improve our union and our communities, the state of our union membership is strong and resilient.

As we gather virtually for the 2021 AFT Massachusetts Convention, we know that help is on the way. The federal American Rescue Plan is delivering much-needed aid to our schools, our cities and towns, and our state. And thanks to our committed professional staff and local union's organizing, schools and libraries are reopening for full in-person learning with important safety measures in place. **Over the last year, the strength of our AFT Massachusetts state federation has allowed us to support our locals and members through every step of the pandemic.**

As your AFT Massachusetts Secretary-Treasurer, it's my job to make sure that our union's resources are used strategically, and I work closely with President Beth Kontos and our Executive Board to appropriate funds. My work is guided by a commitment to maintaining the quality services provided by the AFT Massachusetts staff to members and their communities.

The bulk of our AFT Massachusetts budget supports our expert and diligent professional staff, who provide excellent legal, organizing, and field support to our locals, from assisting with contract fights to supporting local organizing campaigns. They've done incredible work over the past year adapting to daily ►

2021 AFT MASSACHUSETTS SECRETARY-TREASURER'S REPORT FROM BRANT DUNCAN

changes in state guidance and local conditions and working with local unions to ensure that safety guidelines are in place and enforced.

We are also deeply engaged in legislative and political campaigns to ensure that our schools and communities get their fair share of our state's resources.

At the federal level, we're working to pass the PRO Act to support workers' right to join a union and negotiate a fair contract, and we're advocating for family-supporting policies like student debt relief, child care assistance, and family leave.

At the state level, we're continuing to fight for full implementation of the Student Opportunity Act, working to pass the Cherish Act to adequately fund our public colleges and universities, and ramping up the campaign to pass the Fair Share Amendment that would tax multi-millionaires to fund our transportation and public education systems. In local communities across the state, we're fighting for funding for our libraries and a livable wage for paraprofessionals.

We also invest in special projects, campaigns, and organizations, including parent and community partners that advance the interests of our students and schools. Groups we supported this year include Citizens for Public Schools, Jobs with Justice, the Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center, the Massachusetts Education Justice Alliance, Mass Alliance, the Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health, and the AFT Member Organizing Institute.

A major priority continues to be the ongoing Fund Our Future campaign, which won passage of the Student Opportunity Act to fund public K-12 schools and is

now working to pass the Cherish Act to fund public colleges and universities. We are focused on ensuring that Massachusetts' new federal aid goes to support our recovery from the pandemic and does not supplant the promised state resources that are needed to make long-term investments in our schools.

Member engagement and collective action are essential to strong local unions, and I spend a lot of time in the field with our members and partner organizations. This year, the shift to virtual meetings meant less in-person contact with our locals, but even more time spent guiding and advising members and local leaders across the state.

I provide regular training and support to AFT locals on managing member data, financial management and communications. All locals are required to develop budgets, conduct annual reviews of the local's finances, and complete annual reports with the IRS and labor department, and I regularly assist locals with these tasks. I also coordinate member benefits workshops to educate our members about the many benefits available to them as union members, and work closely with AFT partner First Book to provide books to locals to support member engagement and literacy.

Our local unions are stronger when our statewide union is there to provide help with organizing, administration, communications, and professional development. As we begin to emerge from the pandemic, I'm happy to report that AFT Massachusetts has emerged from the past year's trials stronger, more united, and ready to face the challenges to come. ♦

Keynote Speaker Noliwe Rooks

An interdisciplinary scholar, Noliwe Rooks is the W.E.B Du Bois Professor at Cornell University.

The author of four books and numerous articles, essays and op ed's, Rooks has received research funding from the Ford Foundation, the Mellon Foundation and the Woodrow Wilson School among others. She lectures frequently at colleges and universities around the country and is a regular contributor to popular outlets such as *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Time Magazine* and NPR.



Rooks' current book, in which she coined the term "segrenomics," is *Cutting School: Privatization, Segregation, and the End of Public Education* which won an award for non-fiction from the Hurston/Wright Foundation. Her current research, for which she has received a Kaplan Fellowship and a fellowship from the Atkinson Center for a Sustainable Future, will explore relationships between capitalism, land, urban food politics and cannabis legalization in the United States.

She is a professor in Africana Studies, the director of American Studies, an affiliated faculty member in the Center for Inequality Studies, a Faculty Fellow in the Atkinson Center for a Sustainable Future, and a member of the core faculty in Feminist, Gender and Sexuality Studies. ♦

Congratulations to our AFT Massachusetts 2021 Distinguished Service Award Recipients.



The AFT Massachusetts Distinguished Service Awards are presented annually to AFT Massachusetts members who have demonstrated an outstanding level of service and dedication to their local union.

Educator in the PreK-12 system, vocational education and school collaboratives

Laura Lamarre-Anderson – United Teachers of Lowell, Local 495

John King – United Teachers of Lowell, Local 495

Two awards to a member in the public or private higher education system, municipal librarian or nurse

Tracy Breeden – MLSA, Local 4928

Elaine Bombaci – Salem Teachers Union, Local 1258

Two awards to a School Related-Personnel member (which includes all non-supervisory, non-certified employees in K-12 and vocational education schools)

Kim Thompson – Springfield Federation of Paraprofessionals, Local 4098

Priscilla Terry – AFT Amesbury, Local 1033

One award to a Retired AFT Massachusetts member

James (Timo) Philip – Boston Teachers Union, Local 66

One award to a member 35 years of age or younger or a member new to the union

Cecil Carey – Boston Teachers Union, Local 66

Congratulations to our Massachusetts AFL-CIO 2021 Labor Scholarship Award Recipients.



KATHLEEN A. KELLEY SCHOLARSHIP AWARD

Nathaniel White
Holliston High School

ALBERT SHANKER SCHOLARSHIP AWARD

Leah Cahill Billerica Memorial High School	John Caponigro Swampscott High School
Kevin Carpenter Tyngsborough High School	Emily Gross Boston Latin Academy
Joel Jancewicz Amesbury High School	

SANDRA FELDMAN SCHOLARSHIP AWARD

Kevin Toler Quincy High School	Matthew Malnati Billerica Memorial High School
--	--

JAY PORTER SCHOLARSHIP AWARD

Matthew Garrett
Bishop Feehan High School

All recipients will receive a \$1,500.00 scholarship award. Winners were selected based on their score on the Massachusetts AFL-CIO annual labor examination and must have a parent or guardian who is a dues paying member from one of our AFT Massachusetts locals.

AFT Amesbury is holding down healthcare costs with healthy food, standing desks.

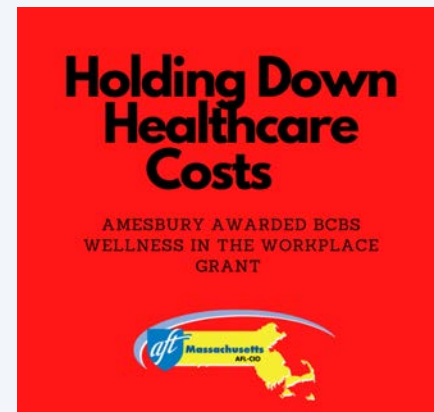


In recent years, a major issue facing municipal employees, including educators, is the skyrocketing rate of health insurance premiums. The City of Amesbury, however, has avoided significant rate increases over the past decade. Local union leaders attribute part of this success to an innovative partnership with the City to offer health and wellness programming to employees.

AFT Amesbury President Cindy Yetman chairs the city's MIIA Well Power committee, where she is joined by Alyssa Premo from the Mayor's office and other city employees. Together, they have applied for and received multiple grants to support health and wellness programming in the city.

"My involvement with wellness programming started when the rising cost of insurance premiums made me think outside the box," said Cindy Yetman. "I believe our partnership with the City of Amesbury and MIIA Blue Cross Blue Shield to offer health and wellness programming has allowed our health insurance premium rates to maintain some stability."

Employee premiums have never been raised anywhere near the double digits as the national average increases at times are reported, according to Yetman. There has been a renewal as well where increases were not made at all. ►



AFT AMESBURY HOLDING DOWN HEALTHCARE COSTS WITH HEALTHY FOOD, STANDING DESKS

“We have been able to offer better benefits for our city employees in our most recent renewals,” she said. “In the past we actually were able to decrease dental premium costs and add more robust coverage. I believe the benefits for our city and our employees has made this work worthwhile.”

This month, Amesbury’s MIIA Well Power committee was awarded a \$20,000 ‘Wellness in the Workplace’ grant from MIIA Blue Cross Blue Shield to install ‘Fresh Fridge’ healthy vending machines in four schools, City Hall, and a city public works multi-office building. The grant also allowed for the purchase of 40–50 standing desks for city employees.

Before applying for the grant, the Well Power committee conducted a survey of city employees, with 217 employees participating. The top choices for wellness initiatives among participating employees were standing desks and

healthy vending machines. The new ‘Fresh Fridge’ healthy vending machines, made by the MA-based company 6AM Health, offer nutritious salads, lunch and dinner bowls, sandwiches and wraps, cold-pressed juices, and protein overnight oats/snacks for nominal fees.

“People are happy to have healthy food options in the building and in City Hall close to downtown operations,” said Yetman. “Providing improved food options is another step we’re taking in Amesbury to help employees stay healthy and try to assist in our health insurance costs.” ♦



“We have been able to offer better benefits for our city employees in our most recent renewals,” Cindy Yetman said. “In the past we actually were able to decrease dental premium costs and add more robust coverage. I believe the benefits for our city and our employees has made this work worthwhile.”

Lawrence Teachers' Union gives away books, winter clothes, and school supplies at Mobile Food Market.



Members of the Lawrence Teachers' Union and AFT Massachusetts distributed hundreds of free books, winter clothes, and school supplies to Lawrence families earlier this month at the Lawrence Mobile Food Market, hosted by the Lawrence Public Schools (LPS) and the Greater Boston Food Bank. On Saturday, December 12, educators gave away approximately 2000 books, 500 sets of winter hats, gloves, and scarves, and other school supplies to LPS families.

"Our book, clothing, and school supply giveaway was a huge success. It was great to have the opportunity to put books in the hands of our students, and make sure they have warm clothes they need to get fresh air and explore the outdoors this winter," said **Lawrence Teachers' Union President Kim Barry**. "I'm grateful to all the LTU members who volunteered their time to sort and distribute these important supplies, and to all those who have volunteered regularly at the Mobile Food Market to ensure that Lawrence families have healthy food to eat. Lawrence continues to be hit hard by the pandemic, and it will take community support efforts like this for us to get through the winter together."



The giveaway was supported by the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation, which gave AFT Massachusetts a \$25,000 grant this year to support students struggling with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. ►

LAWRENCE TEACHERS' UNION GIVES AWAY BOOKS, WINTER CLOTHES, AND SCHOOL SUPPLIES AT MOBILE FOOD MARKET

“We love making our students smile, even when it’s behind their masks. Especially now, when many students can’t be in the classroom safely, it’s important to ensure that students have age-appropriate books at home,” said **AFT Massachusetts President Beth Kontos**. “I want to thank the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation for partnering with us to support our students during the pandemic, with a focus on the communities like Lawrence that have been affected most by COVID-19.”

“The coronavirus pandemic and resulting economic crisis continues to have significant impact on children and families across the Commonwealth,” said **Jeff Bellows, Vice President of Corporate Citizenship and Public Affairs at Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts**. “We are proud to support longstanding partners like the American Federation of Teachers Massachusetts as they work on the frontlines helping to ensure our students get the support they need during these critical times and always.”

Members of the Lawrence Teachers Union (LTU) regularly volunteer with the Mobile Food Market in Lawrence to support their students and community. At the Mobile Food Market, families can choose from a diverse selection of free fresh produce and dairy products, as well as frozen soup and high-protein items.



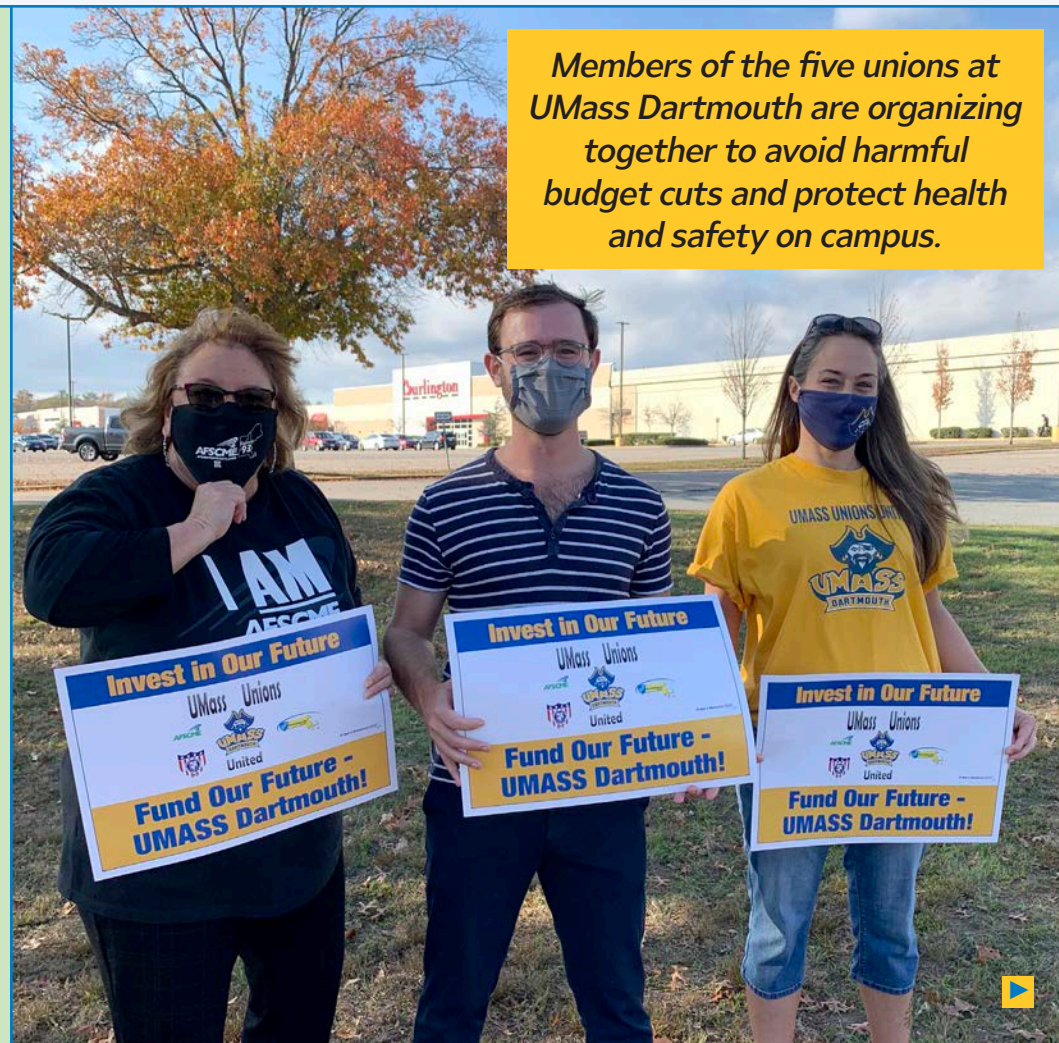
Especially during the coronavirus crisis, when many Lawrence residents have lost jobs and income, families depend on the Mobile Food Market for healthy food. November’s LPS Mobile Food Market served over 500 households, including approximately 1,400 LPS students. ♦

Members of the Lawrence Teachers Union (LTU) regularly volunteer with the Mobile Food Market in Lawrence to support their students and community. At the Mobile Food Market, families can choose from a diverse selection of free fresh produce and dairy products, as well as frozen soup and high-protein items.

UMass Dartmouth
Unions are organizing
together to avoid cuts,
protect health and
safety on campus.



Members of the five unions at UMass Dartmouth are organizing together to avoid harmful budget cuts and protect health and safety on campus.



UMASS DARTMOUTH UNIONS ARE ORGANIZING TOGETHER TO AVOID CUTS, PROTECT HEALTH AND SAFETY ON CAMPUS.

Members of the five unions at UMass Dartmouth, including two AFT Massachusetts affiliates, are organizing together to avoid harmful budget cuts and protect health and safety on campus.

When the pandemic hit this spring, the UMass Dartmouth Faculty Federation, Local 1895, which represents faculty, professional staff, part-time lecturers, and research assistants and associates, and the UMass Maintainers, Local 6350, which represents maintenance and trades staff, joined with campus members of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) to ensure that health and safety measures were in place. The unions established a labor management health and safety committee with new Chancellor Mark Preble, and the two sides were able to successfully bargain major safety protections.

“Here at the UMass Dartmouth campus all five unions on campus have diligently worked on health and safety for the better part of eight months,” says **Nick Gula, a member activist with the UMass Maintainers.** “In that time, with the help of our AFT field representative Mike Regan, we have successfully negotiated all the health and safety concerns that we had, like testing, signage and HVAC just to name a few.”

After immediate safety concerns were addressed, the unions continued working together to avoid layoffs due to the campus budget deficit ►



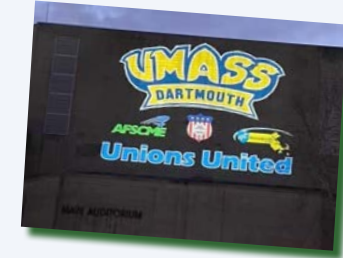
UMASS DARTMOUTH UNIONS ARE ORGANIZING TOGETHER TO AVOID CUTS, PROTECT HEALTH AND SAFETY ON CAMPUS.

created by the pandemic. Members engaged in collective action including standouts, petitions and legislative meetings, and reached an agreement that avoided layoffs by implementing furloughs and pay reductions while allowing workers to access enhanced federal unemployment benefits.

“Working together is our strength,” says **Dr. Grant O’Rielly, President of the UMass Dartmouth Faculty Federation**. “The UMass Dartmouth unions have accomplished so much by working together on health & safety issues, the salary giveback to protect jobs across the campus, and outreach to local legislators asking that the UMass President’s Office use the system contingency funds to support the faculty, staff and students working and learning together.”

Union members continue to advocate for the UMass system to tap into the system’s stabilization fund, which contains more than \$114 million designated to “provide budgetary stabilization for operations due to unforeseen and/or uncontrollable circumstances to ensure responsible long-term financial stability.” Members say the COVID-19 emergency is exactly the situation the stabilization fund was meant to address.

“Privatization of maintenance services, attrition of staff, and the UMass trustees’ unwillingness to use the 100 plus million dollars in reserve; these things underscore the lack of appreciation many members feel,” says **Saul Friedman, Vice President of the UMass Maintainers**. ▶



UMASS DARTMOUTH UNIONS ARE ORGANIZING TOGETHER TO AVOID CUTS, PROTECT HEALTH AND SAFETY ON CAMPUS.

“UMass President Marty Meehan is out of touch and needs to release some of the reserves to save jobs.”

The unions have launched a petition calling on UMass President Marty Meehan and UMass Board of Trustees Chairman Robert Manning to commit to not cutting programs, people, or services, and members of the contingent English faculty wrote an open letter to the Legislature that was published in *Commonwealth Magazine*. Members of the unions say they’ll continue organizing and advocating in the coming months.

“We have been meeting regularly with legislators to fund higher education now and into the future,” says Gula. “To date we have met with 37 out of 47 local State Representatives and State Senators and wrote a letter with conjunction with State Sen. Mark Montigny’s office to be sent to the Board of Trustees’ office and the President’s office.”

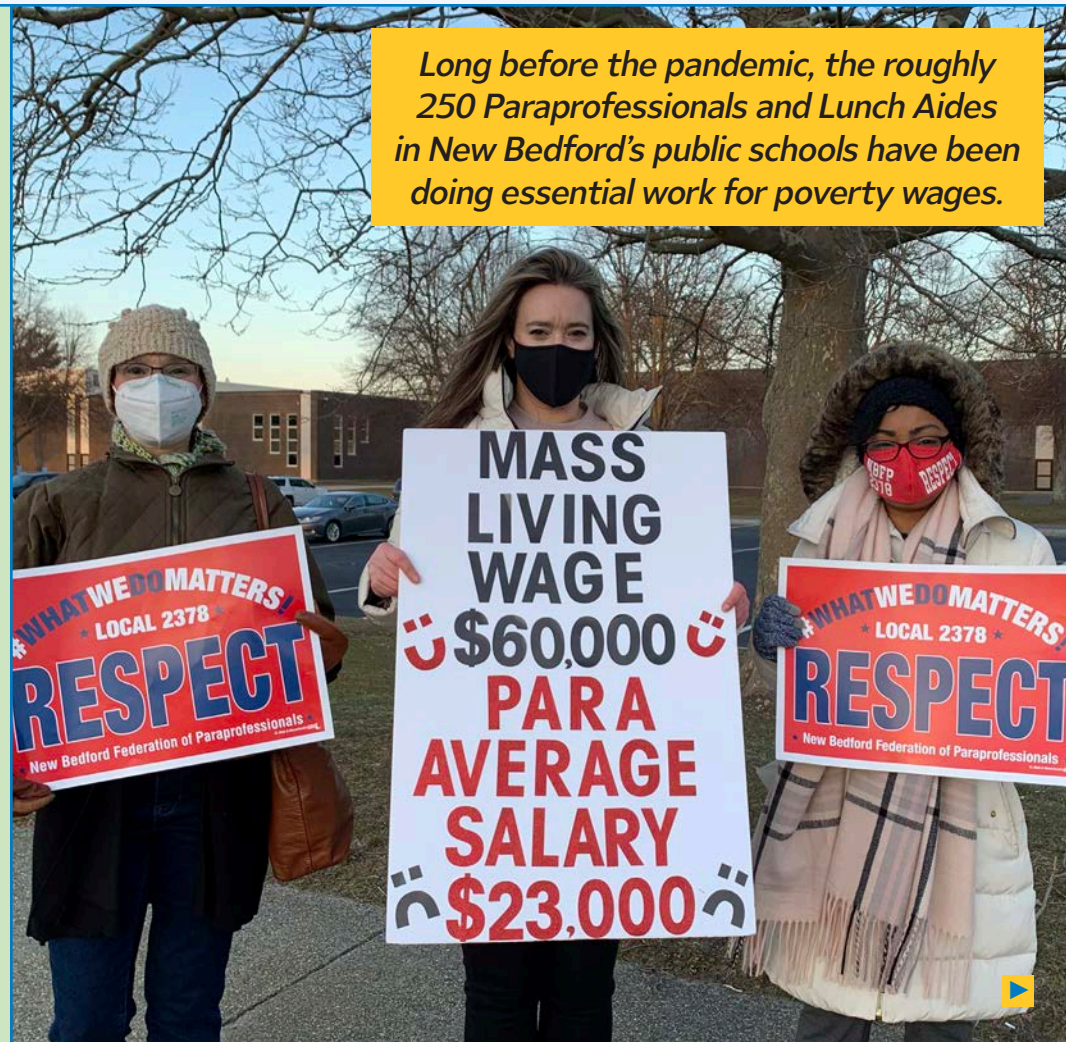
“We have accomplished a lot but there is more to do,” says Dr. O’Rielly. “We need to build on our successes and work towards increased funding for public higher education, to tie that funding so that it invested in the educational mission of UMASS, address the student debt crisis, and to ensure that the state colleges and university continue to contribute to their local communities and remain places where the people of Massachusetts can get a high quality, affordable education.” ♦



It's time to give
New Bedford's
Paraprofessionals
and Lunch Aides a
much-needed raise.



Long before the pandemic, the roughly 250 Paraprofessionals and Lunch Aides in New Bedford's public schools have been doing essential work for poverty wages.



IT'S TIME TO GIVE NEW BEDFORD'S PARAPROFESSIONALS AND LUNCH AIDES A MUCH-NEEDED RAISE.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted many essential workers in our society who do important in-person work, often for very low wages. Long before the pandemic, the roughly 250 Paraprofessionals and Lunch Aides in New Bedford's public schools have been doing essential work for poverty wages. **With New Bedford set to receive millions of dollars in state and federal education aid this year it's time to give the district's Paraprofessionals and Lunch Aides a much-needed raise that recognizes the difficult work they do daily.**

Paraprofessionals, or Paras, provide instructional, behavioral, and other support to students, especially students with special education needs such as physical or developmental disabilities. That work includes everything from helping students with schoolwork to feeding and diapering them. A typical day includes de-escalating behavioral issues, helping students communicate, supporting students with physical disabilities move about the classroom and building daily living skills. Paras are often simultaneously working as educators, caregivers, guidance counselors, and translators – all wrapped up in one job.

This school year, in addition to our regular work with students with high-needs who are learning in-person, Paras are managing the technology for virtual classrooms and keeping in touch with ►



IT'S TIME TO GIVE NEW BEDFORD'S PARAPROFESSIONALS AND LUNCH AIDES A MUCH-NEEDED RAISE.

►students who are learning from home. In the classroom, Paras ensure that students practice social distancing and wear proper personal protective equipment (PPE) – not an easy task with many high-needs students who don't understand the need for these safety measures.

Lunch Aides have seen their jobs transformed by the pandemic as well. They now are required to run grab and go meal collection sites for students doing remote learning and to send home additional food for families. Some must carry fifty-pound crates up several flights of stairs to deliver meals to students in their classrooms.

Given all the important work that Paras and Lunch Aides do, it might surprise you to learn that a Paraprofessional starting in the New Bedford Public School District makes only \$13.64 an hour. They start at \$15.28 per hour if they have an Associates degree or higher. Newly hired Lunch Aides start at \$11.11 an hour – less than the state's \$13.50 minimum wage, which doesn't legally bind municipalities. Over the last decade, Paras at the top steps have roughly received an 80 cent-per-hour wage increase.

These poverty wages have real consequences for our students. Turnover is high, with Paras regularly leaving to work at better ►



IT'S TIME TO GIVE NEW BEDFORD'S PARAPROFESSIONALS AND LUNCH AIDES A MUCH-NEEDED RAISE.

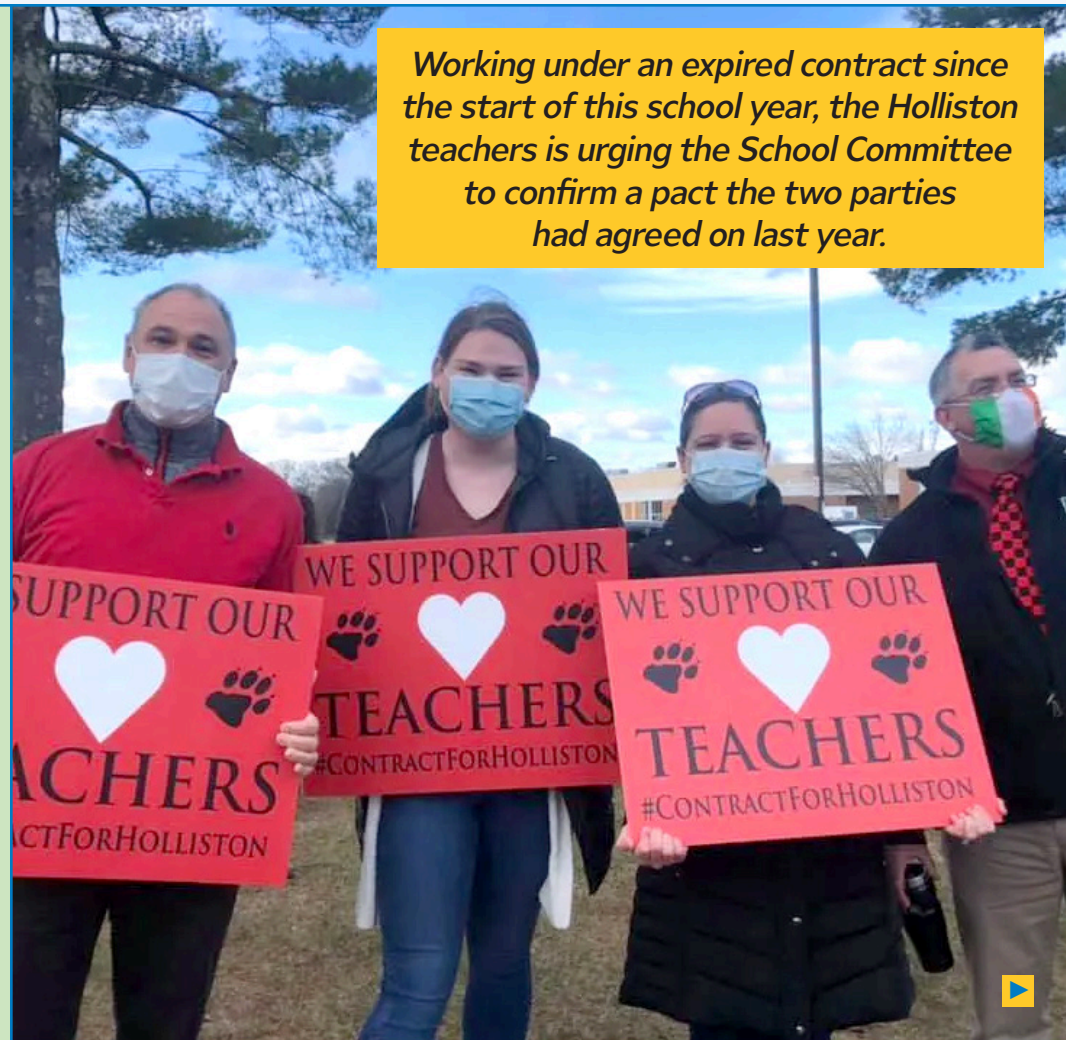
paying jobs or working multiple jobs to survive. That means disruption for our students, who need all the stability they can give them. It also means New Bedford is losing out on the experience of skilled professionals who know how to help students reach their full potential.

In our union's current negotiations with the district, the Union is merely asking for the same reasonable raise that classroom teachers are receiving: a 1.75 percent increase, with a two percent increase for the most experienced Paras who have gone years without a significant pay raise. That's far from what Paras and Lunch Aides deserve. Rather than working to raise the wages of the district's lowest paid workers, the school department's lawyer has rejected this bare-minimum proposal. It's clear that the school department can afford this small increase in pay with millions of dollars in new state and federal education aid they will receive in the 2021-2022 school year.

This year has brought widespread recognition and thanks for the work that essential workers do, but kind words don't pay the bills. There's nothing more essential than caring for and supporting our highest-needs kids. It's time for the New Bedford Public Schools to do the right thing, and give us the raise they deserve. ♦



Holliston Teachers Union tells School Board: Keep your promise, ratify our contract.



HOLLISTON TEACHERS UNION TELLS SCHOOL BOARD: KEEP YOUR PROMISE, RATIFY OUR CONTRACT.

“What you are seeing here in Holliston are teachers advocating for themselves. We are so thankful for the outpouring of support that we have received from the community as they have come to learn about our contract situation,” said **Holliston Federation of Teachers (HFT) President Jaime**. “We hope that the support shown by parents and community leaders gives the School Committee the backing they need to honor the contract made in good faith last year and to put forth a budget that supports it.”



The Holliston School Committee and the HFT negotiated an agreement last March that, according to a letter sent to teachers by the School Committee, was reached “with integrity and good faith on both sides.” The teachers voted to ratify the agreement on May 5, 2020. Two days later, the Committee voted not to ratify the agreement due to the anticipated financial hardship caused by the COVID pandemic. As a consequence of this action, the teachers of Holliston have been working under an expired contract for the entirety of this school year. ►

HOLLISTON TEACHERS UNION TELLS SCHOOL BOARD: KEEP YOUR PROMISE, RATIFY OUR CONTRACT.

Despite the School Committee's fiduciary concerns, Holliston did not experience a decrease in state funding or town revenue. Teachers are now asking the School Committee to keep the promise they made to the Holliston teachers and put forth a budget that supports the deal made in good faith last spring.



A year ago education as we knew it in Holliston was upended by the global pandemic and the town was rightly worried about a massive financial downturn. Luckily for Holliston, that predicted financial calamity did not come to pass,” said **Holliston teacher Amanda Rivera**. “In the intervening year, teachers have kept their promise to the community; teaching in person five days a week since our doors opened this fall, all while under an expired contract. It is time for the School Committee to keep their promise to educators and ratify the deal.” ♦

AFT Massachusetts is supporting our public school Librarians during the Covid-19 crisis.



Library workers have been serving our community in front-facing positions throughout the pandemic. They need vaccines in order to safely serve our patrons.



SUPPORT OUR PUBLIC SCHOOL LIBRARIANS DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS.

“The past year has been incredibly challenging for library staff. As the pandemic took hold in March of 2020, we quickly pivoted from providing in-person support to all remote services. Exclusively virtual programming and story-times, technology assistance, database support, and reference services became the norm. Librarians worked out of kitchens, living rooms, attics, and cars to provide these services to our patrons.

In late spring and early summer of 2020, we pivoted again as we started to re-enter our buildings and began to provide safe in-person services – curbside materials pick-up, computer appointments, limited browsing – while still maintaining the robust array of remote services our patrons had come to depend on. We were – and are – essential to our patrons and the well-being of our communities where we provide educational, professional, and personal enrichment that our patrons depend on to thrive.”

— Pat Kelly, president of the
Massachusetts Library Staff Association



*Protect librarians,
protect our
communities!*



SUPPORT OUR PUBLIC SCHOOL LIBRARIANS DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS.

“As librarians, you know better than anyone just how vital you are to all of our communities and schools. You provide support where a classroom doesn’t reach and you service students in unique ways that the rest of us just can’t. COVID shined a spotlight on what we have always known: librarians are essential workers.

AFT has been advocating for your prioritization in the state’s vaccine distribution plan, alongside teachers and educational staff. We will continue to advocate for your safe return back to schools and continue to champion common sense collaboration among all librarians, teachers and school employees to serve our students the best we can.”

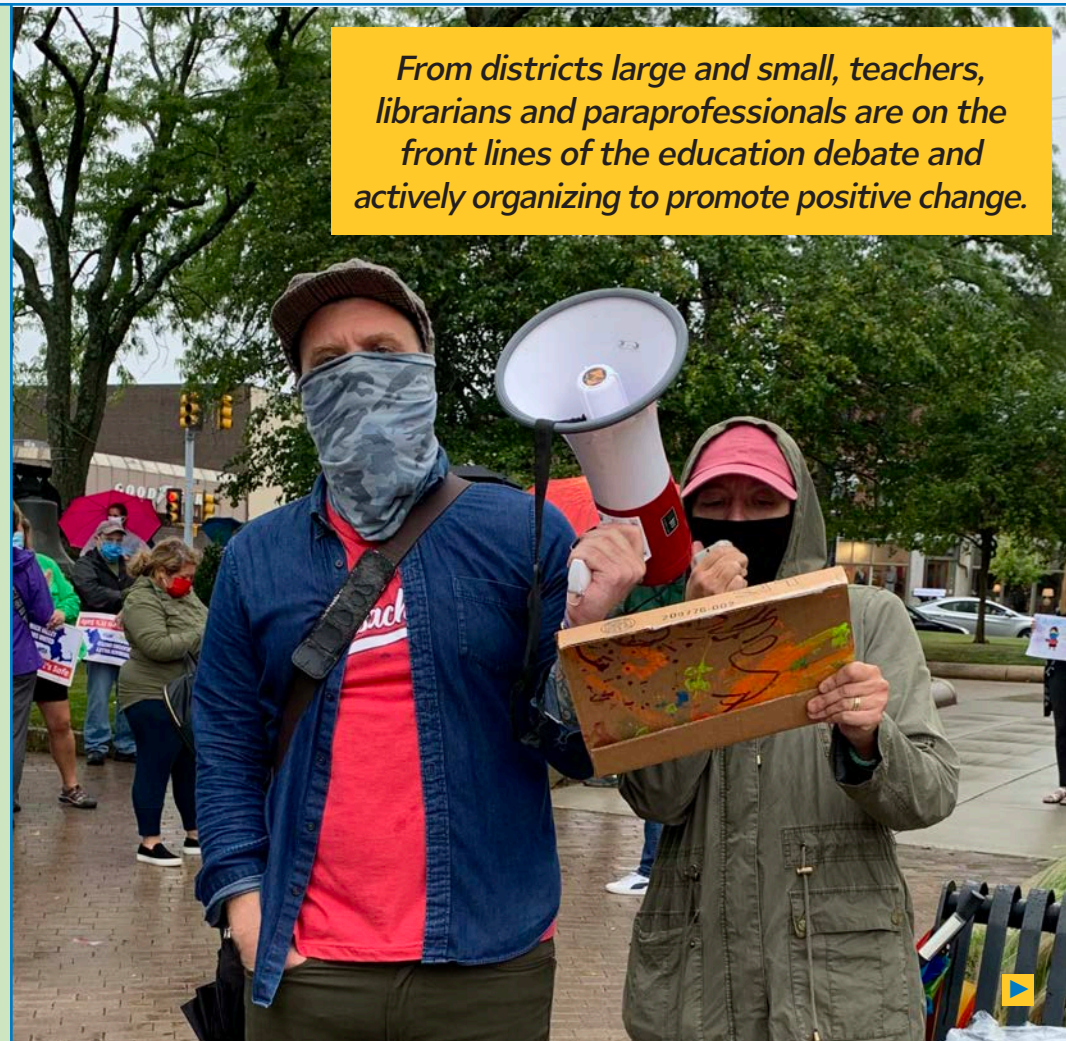
— **Beth Kontos, President,**
AFT Massachusetts



Stronger together!
AFT Massachusetts
members take action to
stand up for education.



From districts large and small, teachers, librarians and paraprofessionals are on the front lines of the education debate and actively organizing to promote positive change.



STRONGER TOGETHER! AFT MASSACHUSETTS MEMBERS TAKE ACTION TO STAND UP FOR EDUCATION.



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It takes more than vaccines to open schools safely!



**Building
Upgrades**

**Smaller
Class Size**

**Pool
Testing**

**Full
Funding**

Vaccines

PPE

Cleaning

**Proper
Ventilation**

**Contact
Tracing**



Safe In-Person Learning