



HARVARD GRADUATE STUDENTS UNION

HGSU-UAW Local 5118 | a union of student workers at Harvard University

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Mayor Michelle Wu Declines to Cross HGSU-UAW Picket Line at Harvard Commencement

CAMBRIDGE, MASS. – Mayor Michelle Wu will stand with Harvard’s striking student workers this Wednesday, declining to cross HGSU-UAW’s picket line and withdrawing from her scheduled remarks at Harvard’s Commencement.

As a stalwart advocate for the city of Boston, Mayor Wu has dedicated her tenure to making Boston a better city for its workers, its families, and its communities. Her decision to stand with HGSU-UAW exemplifies a new generation of leadership, one that does not simply espouse values at a podium but demonstrates them in moments like this one. We are deeply grateful for her solidarity.

Harvard will claim to celebrate the achievements and contributions of its students during Commencement, while having spent 15 months refusing to provide the fundamental workplace protections for student workers that make many of these achievements possible. Harvard's failure to provide student workers with a living wage, basic protections for non-citizen and disabled workers, and common-sense labor protections against harassment and discrimination led HGSU-UAW’s membership to authorize a strike, with over 95% of votes cast in favor.

Harvard’s classrooms and laboratories run because of the contributions of the over 4,000 student workers represented by HGSU-UAW. Beyond their own individual scholarship, student workers sustain the cutting-edge research of faculty across disciplines and are foundational to the academic experience of Harvard’s undergraduate students. HGSU-UAW will bring its picket line to Commencement to make clear to the broader Harvard community that these workers deserve conditions that protect them in their workplace and allow them to afford to live while doing this work.

We urge the University to put its espoused values into practice at the bargaining table and to negotiate an end to this strike. Mayor Wu’s leadership continues to keep workers in Boston and beyond strong, and we are honored to have her support.

In response to comments made by Mayor Wu's office in [The Harvard Crimson](#), HGSU-UAW adds the following:

HGSU-UAW appreciates Mayor Wu's office's efforts to find a path forward and recognizes that, as a Harvard College and Harvard Law School alumna, this was a difficult decision to make. We are grateful that, in the end, Mayor Wu chose to honor our picket line.

HGSU-UAW's decision to bring its picket line to Harvard's Commencement was made after 15 months of bargaining and 6 weeks of striking for basic workplace protections without meaningful movement from the university. These protections include independent investigation procedures for student workers who face harassment or discrimination and codified support for non-citizen workers. We believe no worker should have to negotiate for these protections, and we are grateful for our community's understanding of why we cannot compromise on them. The union asked Commencement speakers scheduled throughout the week to honor the picket lines we have run continuously over the past 6 weeks by declining to participate in Commencement events. While we understand that Commencement activities will carry on, any speaker participation in those activities, regardless of format, would have required crossing our picket line. We thank Mayor Wu for opting not to.

We remain committed to the principles that make a picket line meaningful. A picket line is only as strong as the solidarity it commands, and we are grateful to Mayor Wu for her support.

About HGSU-UAW Local 5118

The Harvard Graduate Students Union - United Auto Workers (HGSU-UAW Local 5118) represents over 4,000 student workers across Harvard University's 13 schools in their capacity as teachers and researchers. Harvard student workers from all departments joined together in April 2018 to form HGSU-UAW. They are fighting for equitable pay to keep up with the rising cost of living, legal and financial support for non-citizen student workers, protections from harassment and discrimination, and "fair share fees" to equitably distribute the expenses of union representation.

About UAW

The International Union, United Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of America (UAW) is one of the largest and most diverse unions in North America, with members in virtually every sector of the economy. UAW-represented workplaces range from multinational corporations, small manufacturers and state and local governments to colleges and universities, hospitals and private non-profit organizations. The UAW has more than 400,000 active members

and more than 580,000 retired members in the United States, Canada and Puerto Rico. The UAW represents roughly 100,000 higher education workers nationally, including university staff, postdoctoral researchers, adjunct professors, and graduate student workers.

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