

## COVID coalition has school plan

### Seeks voice on health, safety for frontline workers

A new state coalition that includes Local 888 has laid out 16 health and safety concerns that should be addressed before public schools reopen during the ongoing pandemic.

"It is imperative that state and local governments fully address COVID-19 issues in the schools," said Local 888 President **Brenda Rodrigues**.

"Our members' needs must be met. These include putting intensive cleaning practices in place, preserving school staff pay and benefits, providing adequate-sized and well-ventilated rooms, and maintaining socially distanced transportation for our students."



**SOCIAL DISTANCING:** Paraprofessionals in Marlborough are gearing up for the opening of the public schools, which will feature one type of a 'hybrid' model, with kindergarteners, for example in school full-time.

The new Coalition to Safely Reopen Schools said that: "Ours is a frontline perspective from those who will be ultimately responsible for the health, safety and quality of education that students will receive as a result of these decisions." The coalition has laid out a plan for reopening schools.

Some of the top issues are: making sure there is proper ventilation and circulation of air, ensuring proper social distancing and providing access to rapid testing — with clear guidelines for contact tracing for those who test positive for COVID-19.

*For more 'safe schools,' page 4.*

## Protecting members as economy reopens

School cafeteria workers and custodians were well represented at a Local 888 Zoom seminar on "Guidelines and tips for returning to work safely." "The most important thing for Local 888, said President **Brenda Rodrigues**, "is to make sure that our members have their voices heard in the workplace."

Experts from the Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health, which Local 888 belongs to, organized the presentation. "We here at MassCOSH want to support the issues and *See page 2 for more on MassCOSH*



### Convention set for Oct. 24

The Local 888 Convention will run from 10 a.m. to noon on Sat., Oct. 24, via Zoom. The union has identified six key industry sectors: early childhood education, public schools, higher education, public authorities and state and municipal workers.

There will be:

- Breakout sessions on different sectors.
- A session on the new retiree chapter.
- Discussion of important political topics.

*For more information as it develops, see <http://www.seiu888.org/convention/>.*

# Get-out-the-vote drive pays off

Local 888 was a big winner at the polls on Primary Day, with eight candidates endorsed by the local's Committee on Political Action winning competitive races. COPA also endorsed six candidates running unopposed in the Democratic primary.

In the weeks leading up to the primary, members staffed Local 888's virtual phone banks as part of a campaign to get out the vote. Members of the MassDefenders, a Local 888 affiliate, also took part.

Members went all out to support the re-election campaign of state Sen. Mike Brady, a former Local 888 member representing the 2nd Plymouth and Bristol District. Get-out-the-vote calls focused first on the 300 or so Local 888 members in his district.

In addition, Local 888 members focused on the re-election of state Rep. Michelle DuBois, who represents the 10th Plymouth District and previously served as a Brockton City Councilor.

"It is vital for our union to have allies in the Legislature," said Local 888 President **Brenda Rodrigues**, who made calls along with other 888 members. "That's even more true in the COVID-19 era — in which we need to have legislators who will voice the concerns and needs of our members."

The get-out-the-vote drive paid off.

DuBois got 58 percent of the vote against John Lally, a Brockton councilor who ran as a law-and-order candidate. He was supported by a political action committee, the Massachusetts Majority PAC, closely tied to GOP Gov. Charlie Baker.

For his part, Brady got 57 percent of the vote against primary challenger Moises Rodrigues, a



**TAKING IT TO STATE HOUSE:** SEIU members took part in a recent Boston rally that spotlighted essential workers, who are often black and Latinx, and demanded economic justice for all.

Brockton councilor and former mayor, getting 42.8 percent.

The Local 888 Committee on Political Action urges all members to go out and vote in the Tues., Nov. 3, General Election, which will feature the U.S. presidential race. (See below for more details.)

To register to vote for the Nov. 3 election, see <https://www.sec.state.ma.us/ele/>; the deadline is Oct. 24. There is in-person, mail-in, and online registration (<https://www.sec.state.ma.us/OVR/>).

For a full election report, see <http://www.seiu888.org/2020/09/16/get-out-the-vote-drive-pays-off/>.

## Keep returning workers safe

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demands that you have," said Al Vega, the coalition's director of policy and programs.

MassCOSH has just published "Dying for Work: Documenting the Pandemic's Deadly Toll on Massachusetts Workers." Find it at: <https://bit.ly/DyingforWorkPandemic>.

MassCOSH has also released a "COVID-19 Tool

Kit for Workers: Health and Safety Protections and How to Make Them Happen" (<https://tinyurl.com/MassCOSHCOVID>.) It includes sections particularly of interest to Local 888 members, such as childcare providers, school custodians and cafeteria workers. Also, MassCOSH gave Gov. Charlie Baker's plan failing grades. (For the full report on MassCOSH: <http://www.seiu888.org/2020/09/16/protecting-members-as-economy-reopens/>).



**APPEAL TO LAWMAKERS:** Local 888 President **Brenda Rodrigues** and longtime leader **Teresa Riordan** hold signs at a Brockton rally warning that deep budget cuts could drive the state into a deeper recession. The Coalition for Social Justice and Raise Up Massachusetts organized the event.

## Longtime leader Riordan retires

Outgoing chapter leader and executive board member **Teresa Riordan** has retired from her Westwood job — and from her 20 years of service to Local 888, including nearly three years on the board.

One of her last actions as chapter chair was to persuade her all-female town employees chapter in Westwood to donate chapter funds to Dove, which works to end domestic violence while offering emergency shelter to those in need.

Riordan said she was looking at possible uses for chapter funds earlier this year. One member suggested Dove. Riordan then pitched the charity to her chapter's 23, Local 888 members — who agreed. "My union co-workers wanted to be of service to those in need," said Riordan.

Dove, founded in 1978, provides services such as crisis intervention, counseling, emergency shelter and legal assistance. COVID-19 has affected some services. *For more information on Dove, see <https://dovema.org/>.*

*Chapter funds can be used for a range of purposes, including donations to charity. See: <http://www.seiu888.org/2019/10/30/christmas-often-tis-season-for-spending-chapter-funds/>.*

## Retirees chapter set for takeoff

The new retirees chapter of Local 888 has just launched a recruitment campaign and mailing.

"All retirees are welcome to join," said **Susan Winning**, the new Local 888 Executive Board member for the chapter. "Among other things, retirees will have a vote and a voice on the executive board — and will be part of the ongoing conversation."

Chapter members will be on hand at the union's annual convention, slated for Sat., Oct. 24. A special breakout session for retirees is in the works.

"The new chapter will offer a connection to other SEIU 888 retirees and the broader labor movement," she said. This will include a subscription to *The Spark* and the "Member Portal." And retirees will be able to take part in Local 888's political activities through its Committee on Political Action.



**WINNING**

Winning said that she was eager to remain active in Local 888 after her 2019 retirement. She had been the director of the Labor Education Program at the University of Massachusetts Lowell for 20 years.

She also served both as a Local 888 trustee and executive board member. She was re-elected a trustee in 2018, running on the Leadership for Changing Times slate headed by now-Local 888 President Brenda Rodrigues.

*At this time, the cost to join the Local 888 retirees chapter is \$40 annually. For an application form, [click this link](#). For more info, contact Lidia Calvo at [lcalvo@seiu888.org](mailto:lcalvo@seiu888.org). Other SEIU locals have retiree chapters, as does the international union. (See: <https://www.seiu.org/wuretirees-join/>.) Members of the Local 888 retiree chapter will also get benefits offered by the international.*

In addition, Local 888 has begun offering a BCBS Dental Insurance Plan for members of the retiree chapter. *Enrollment periods apply. For the newly retired, [click this link](#) to get a form. For more info, email Linda Deluca at [ldeluca.funds@seiu888.org](mailto:ldeluca.funds@seiu888.org).*



**RALLY, MARCH:** About 75 workers and supporters joined a College Bound Dorchester protest.

## College Bound vote held up

The August vote count for a union-certification election at the nonprofit College Bound Dorchester/Boston Uncornered was held up after management challenged the eligibility of a sizable number of the participants. The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) is expected to issue a ruling soon.

Votes were cast via mail because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Balloting was tied, six to six, for the votes allowed by management, which had run an anti-union campaign. The NLRB staff will review the seven votes that were challenged by management, since a ruling affects the outcome of the election.

For more on the organizing effort, see <http://www.seiu888.org/2020/07/16/rallies-call-recognize-the-union-now/>

## Coming Attractions

SAVE THE DATE

COMING  
UP

### 'THE LABOR OF LUNCH':

Author Jennifer Gaddis will talk about her new book via Zoom on Thurs., Sept. 24, 2:30 p.m. The celebratory event honors National Food Service Worker's Day. To register, go to:

<http://www.seiu888.org/2020/09/16/food-service-workers-recognition-day/>

### LATEST CLASSES AT THE LABOR GUILD:

Four-session classes will run via Zoom from the week of Oct. 19 to the week of Nov. 9, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. **Mondays:** Steward Training.

**Tuesdays:** Speaking in Public. **Wednesday:**

Power and Struggle. *To register, go to* (<https://laborguild.com/school-of-labor-management-relations/courses/>.)

## Coalition seeks safe schools

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The coalition is made up “of school nurses, teachers, parents, bus drivers, cafeteria workers, librarians, school support staff, janitorial staff, labor, occupational health and community advocates, who came together to provide a frontline perspective.”

The American Federation of Teachers Massachusetts (AFT), Massachusetts Nursing Association and the Massachusetts Coalition for Safety and Health

(MassCOSH) belong to the coalition as well.

Also on the new coalition's must-do list: providing needed personal protective equipment (PPE) for all staff and students, identifying alternative spaces for schools in their respective communities and ensuring appropriate school nurse staffing. For more on the coalition, see <https://www.massnurses.org/news-and-events/p/openItem/11811>.

Local 888 supported #DemandSafeSchools actions on Sept. 2 that involved the AFT, MoveOn and other groups. *For more info, see* <https://www.facebook.com/SEIULocal888/photos/a.360691577312212/3308690302512310>.

## 'Hybrid' part of school reopenings

With the start of fall looming amidst the ongoing pandemic, Local 888 school staff will face a wide variety of reopening plans — as drawn up by the state's disparate districts.

Local 888's Marlborough paraprofessionals returned to school full time and in-person on Aug. 31. A hybrid model for students will start Sept. 21. The students in kindergarten and first, second, 10th and 11th will also be in their schools full time. The rest of the students will cycle in and out of the schools, with part of their learning done “remotely,” meaning online.

The Oxford schools, which have a Local 888 chapter for custodians and cafeteria workers, also has a “hybrid” reopening plan. This means, for example, that elementary school students will be in schools two days per week. See

<http://www.seiu888.org/2020/09/16/hybrid-part-of-school-reopenings/> for the full report.

