



UIC Graduate Employee Organization Statement on Increased Healthcare Premiums

March 19, 2020

Last Thursday, three days after Governor Pritzker declared a state of emergency in Illinois due to the coronavirus pandemic, the University of Illinois Board of Trustees made the unconscionable decision to increase student health insurance premiums. At the Urbana-Champaign campus, premiums will increase by an outrageous 33% beginning in the Fall. Here at UIC, there will be a 3.5% increase, raising the total cost to \$697 per semester.

This decision not only comes in the midst of an unprecedented healthcare and economic crisis, but it also comes just two months after the University president was awarded a \$235,000 raise. At the same time, the Board of Trustees voted to spend \$311.8 million on capital projects (i.e. putting up new buildings on campus).

Luckily, UIC grad workers covered by the GEO contract will not be fully impacted by the 3.5% increase to the Campus Care premium this fall. Our current contract-- which we won after going on a strike that started exactly one year ago today-- says that we will only pay \$260 per semester for Campus Care next Fall and Spring. That will save us \$437 per semester.

However, it remains unclear how the cost of dependent care coverage will be affected by this increase. Under our current contract, the University covers 20% of the cost of Campus Care for one dependent and 10% for additional dependents, something we had to go on strike to win. If this increase applies to dependents too, then grad workers who have dependents on Campus Care will be paying more. It's also unclear how the increase will affect the cost of having Campus Care in the summer, but will most likely mean an increase.

This outrageous increase to the cost of student healthcare in the middle of a pandemic on the part of the University is yet another example of why we need GEO and why it's so vital for everyone who is protected by our hard-won contract become a dues-paying member, so that the union and contract can continue to exist. Tomorrow, GEO will negotiate with the University administration over the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, specifically trying to win increased paid leave during this crisis.

In Solidarity,

GEO Steering Committee

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