

Testimony of Cherrene Horazuk, President of AFSCME 3800
Board of Regents Public Forum on the University Budget
June 12, 2015

My name is Cherrene Horazuk. I work in the Dean's Office of the Humphrey School. I'm the president of AFSCME 3800, the clerical workers union.

I am here today with my AFSCME and Teamster coworkers, to tell the Regents that the more than 4,000 unionized workers at the U need real raises and the budget needs to prioritize all staff, not just those at the top. 2% is not enough. We need 5%. We need a minimum wage of at least \$15 an hour, and an increase in the top of our low pay scales.

We've been told that the budget reflects the U's values, and is fair by giving the same percentage to all employee groups. Yet that's not the real picture. The U's Budget Director acknowledged recently in meetings with our unions that the budget includes an additional 6-7% fringe rate for P&A employees and faculty over civil service and unionized staff. How is that fair? The men's basketball coach just got a \$400,000 raise. That's equivalent to a ½ % for all 1600 clerical workers at the U. The administration finds money when it wants to and needs to find \$ for frontline staff.

Whether it's giving six weeks paid parental leave for those at the top versus two weeks for unionized and civil service workers, or cuts to the Regents Scholarship, which impacts us more than administrators who typically have higher degrees already, the U's wage and benefit policies increase the gap between haves and have-nots, and it's got to stop.

Nearly half of our members say they can't afford to have children or help their kids through college. Ironically, many can't afford to send their kids to this University where they work due to the rising tuition. Half can't afford to take a vacation. Three quarters have paid their medical bills late in the last two years or delayed medical care due to the cost increases. Three quarters can't afford to retire and aren't keeping up with the rising cost of living.

I challenge you to find administrators who have to choose between paying a doctor's bill and buying school supplies for their kids. Between paying a student loan and living on their own. Between caring for an elderly parent or being able to retire. Yet many frontline workers make these choices every day. How does this reflect University values?

We do the behind the scenes work that makes the University run. Without us, the U is just one paper jam, one overflowing toilet, one unmonitored lab away from chaos. We know this because when we ask for time off because we are sick, or want to take vacation, or even just a long lunch in order to attend this budget hearing, many of us are told that we can't and that the unit can't survive without us. That's forgotten though when it's time to talk about raises, or when staffing cuts come down.

The University committed to cut \$90 million in administration over the next few years. But are they cutting administrative bloat, or low paid admin assistants. We know that they cut a few vice presidents, and that's a start. But they also cut over 100 technical positions, including the people who ensure that the systems that monitor the research labs are functioning correctly.

Some say this is a business and corporate salaries for executives are a-ok. This isn't Walmart or Target or US Bank. This is a public land-grant institution funded by taxpayers and student tuition and it should reflect the values of our state. One of those values is that we all do better when we all do better. Rather than following corporate models, the University should set its own example by establishing a standard of living that provides for a dignified life and retirement for its entire workforce, rather than lavish rewards for those at the top and poverty for those of us at the bottom and middle. Frontline staff need raises and respect!