**Unions Give Working People Freedom, Not Take It Away**

***And I’ll fight to keep my voice—for my students, my schools and my community [Please tailor subhead to your constituency: higher education, healthcare, public service, etc.]***

**[Start op-ed with 1-2 sentences about who you are, what you do for your community and why you are proud of your union.]**

Working people, like me and the members I am proud to represent, need the power that comes from having a strong union, now more than ever.

It’s no accident that working people are struggling. For decades, billionaires have led a systematic effort to rig our economy and democracy against working people. And now, these same wealthy, anti-union corporate special interests are using the Supreme Court case called *Janus v. AFSCME Council 31* as their latest attempt to try to take away working people’s freedom—and opportunity—to join together in strong unions to speak up for themselves, the people they serve, their families and their communities.

The Koch brothers, Education Secretary Betsy DeVos and their allies are trying to take unions out, so they can further consolidate their power.

They know that when educators, nurses, police officers, firefighters and other public service workers are free to come together in strong unions, they win things like better working conditions, better wages, healthcare, clean and safe environments, and retirement security, all of which benefit nonunion members as well.

These wealthy corporate interests are trying to starve our public schools, go after our voting rights, and defund and destabilize unions, because they don’t believe anyone but those at the top should have opportunity or a voice in our democracy.

But unions are not going down without a fight, because we care, we fight and we show up:

We care about and fight for great public schools, for economic opportunity and security, and for healthcare so *nobody* is one illness away from bankruptcy and *everyone* can retire with dignity.

We fight against hatred and bigotry in all forms because jobs, justice and democracy go hand in hand.

We show up for our communities and at the ballot box to elect leaders who will champion our values or to run for office ourselves. We show up to support one another, whether we’re delivering safe drinking water to children and families in Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria or helping jump-start economic and educational opportunities in McDowell County, W.Va., the eighth-poorest county in the United States. And we show up and stand up to protect our students, even in the face of the gun violence that is plaguing our schools.

What do these powerful billionaires fight for? They fight to get rid of public education, the right to vote and freedom to form strong unions—the three institutions that enable opportunity and a shot at securing a better life for our families. They fight for tax breaks on their private jets and family fortunes even it if means cutting funding for public schools and healthcare.

They are counting on winning the *Janus* case so that they can continue to rig the rules to funnel more money to the top.

What they aren’t counting on is the millions of teachers, school staff, college faculty, healthcare providers, first responders, and public employees of all stripes—like me—who are standing up to them.

*Janus* is so much more than a court case. It’s about whether or not working people have opportunity and a voice in our economy and our democracy.