SUPPORT THE LORAIN COUNTY JFS STRIKERS! BREAK THE UAW'S ISOLATION OF THEIR SIX-MONTH STRUGGLE!

BY WILL LEHMAN
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More than 100 workers at the Lorain County Job and Family Services (JFS), just outside of Cleveland, Ohio have been on strike since February 18, fighting the agency's demands to maintain poverty-level wages and impossibly high caseloads. The Republican-controlled Board of Commissioners has implemented a long-prepared plan to break the strike and defeat the JFS workers while the UAW bureaucracy has isolated the striking workers and done nothing to mobilize the tens of thousands of UAW and other union members in Ohio to win this battle.

I call on every UAW member and workers throughout Ohio and across the country to give their full support to more than 100 Lorain County Job and Family Services workers who have now been on strike for more than six months.

Since February 18, these workers have held their picket lines through freezing rain and summer heat, without paychecks, refusing to accept poverty wages, unaffordable health care and intolerable workloads. JFS workers administer Medicaid, SNAP, childcare and other programs relied on by tens of thousands of residents—many are paid so little they qualify for the same benefits they administer.

The county's offer of a 12 percent raise over three years does not begin to make up for years of inflation and understaffing that drives out experienced workers. Workers are demanding another dollar an hour above that—they deserve that and far more. My campaign fights for a 50 percent wage increase for UAW members and fully paid health insurance with no premiums or copays.

This strike was prepared and provoked by the county. On January 27, the Republican-controlled Board of Commissioners unanimously rejected a neutral fact-finder's report, and on February 10, before the strike even began, it notified JFS workers it was halting negotiations altogether. Every statement since has repeated the same line: the offer is "last and best," unchanged since February. The plan was to smash the strike and drive the defeated workers back to their jobs on the county's terms—using overtime and staff from six other counties while the strikers went without pay.

The UAW did nothing to prepare for this confrontation. UAW Region 2B covers more than 50 companies across Ohio and Indiana, including nearly 1,800 UAW Local 1250 members just 25 miles away at Ford's Cleveland Engine Plant in Brook Park, plus thousands more UAW and USW members in auto parts and steel across Cleveland, Lorain and Elyria. Yet UAW President Shawn Fain and Region 2B Director David Green have done nothing to mobilize union members behind the JFS workers. Instead, the JFS workers have been left alone on the picket line for six months on poverty-level strike benefits of $550 a week with the UAW apparatus telling them to rely on the State Employment Relations Board and elect Democrats to the Board of Commissioners.

On August 18, UAW officials promised a "significant escalation" of the struggle. It turned out to be an August 25 rally campaigning for Democrats against Republican Commissioner Jeff Riddell in November—not one additional worker mobilized, only an appeal to the ballot box two months away. This is not a strategy to win—its total capitulation, which must be rejected.

UAW President Shawn Fain has aligned the union in a de facto partnership with Trump on the escalating trade war, giving a president facing massive popular opposition the union's cover, even as that administration guts Medicaid and SNAP—the very programs JFS workers administer. At the same time, the UAW tells strikers to place their hopes in the Democratic Party. But the Democrats have not opposed Trump's assault on social programs—they have colluded with it, agreeing that resources must be diverted to war against Russia and military expansion instead of the services workers depend on. Electing Democrats in

November will not reverse this: like the Republicans, they answer to the corporations and the financial oligarchy, not the working class.

To reverse the situation, JFS workers must take the conduct of the strike into their own hands. That means transferring power over this struggle into the hands of a rank-and-file strike committee, elected by and accountable only to the workers on the picket line. While JFS strikers have gone six months without a paycheck, the officials who left them isolated have continued drawing six-figure salaries—UAW President Shawn Fain was paid $276,378 in total compensation in 2025, and Region 2B Director David Green, who covers Ohio, was paid $231,740. Last year the UAW apparatus spent 14 times more on the salaries of its top executives and staffers than it did on strike benefits.

Those who presided over this capitulation have no right to continue directing the strike. A rank-and-file committee should fight for:

1. **Expanding the struggle throughout the UAW and public sector by mobilizing autoworkers, parts workers, steelworkers, teachers, nurses, Cleveland Public Library and Cleveland Clinic Lutheran Hospital workers in joint demonstrations and action.**
2. **Wage increases that recover everything lost to inflation and concessions, fully paid health care, and mass hiring to end unsafe workloads.**
3. **Defense of Medicaid, SNAP and all social programs, uniting the fight for wages with the fight to preserve the services workers and the public depend on.**
4. **Full strike pay and rank-and-file control—the UAW's resources belong to the membership, not the apparatus at Solidarity House.**

Northern Ohio has a rich tradition of this kind of struggle, built through sit-down strikes and shop-floor militancy, not appeals to politicians. Workers at the now-closed Lordstown GM plant waged some of the most famous wildcat strikes in American labor history, defying company and UAW leaders alike, and steelworkers at the shuttered Lorain US Steel mill fought the same battles against a bureaucracy that abandoned them. That tradition must be revived.

I urge every UAW member: do not let the Lorain County workers fight alone another day. Discuss this struggle in your workplace, pass resolutions of support, and organize delegations to the picket lines. My campaign is fighting to abolish the bureaucratic apparatus that isolates these struggles, and to build a network of rank-and-file committees uniting workers across workplaces, industries and borders.

Expand the strike! Mobilize the UAW and USW membership! Unite public-sector and industrial workers throughout Ohio! Build rank-and-file committees and put power in the hands of the workers!

JOIN THE FIGHT FOR WORKERS' POWER!

Get involved with the rank-and-file campaign in the UAW elections.

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