



GSO Senate Resolution 24.07

A Resolution Establishing the GSO's Recognition and Support of Syracuse University's Hourly Food Service Worker Union Campaign

Author(s): CJ Arnell (Vice President of Internal Affairs)

Sponsor(s):

Date(s): 7 February 2024 (Introduced)

Action(s): Passed (29 Yes, 2 No, 0 Abstain)

Chair of the Senate: CJ Arnell

President Pro Tempore of the Senate: Roger Rosena

Parliamentarian: R. Luke VanderSchaaff

President of the Student Body: Daniel J. Kimmel

Whereas, the Graduate Student Organization was created to establish greater representation of graduate students' interests and concerns and to establish policies and initiatives that are in the best interests of all graduate students at Syracuse University and has the power to establish a position on any matter of importance to graduate students¹; and,

Whereas, the Graduate Student Organization supports the right to free and open dialogue on any topic of importance to graduate students, including worker unionization²; and,

Whereas, Syracuse University Food Services is the largest student employer on campus³; and,

Whereas, the majority of hourly food service workers are also graduate students⁴; and,

Whereas, the majority of food service workers at Syracuse University are also international students⁵ who, due to visa restrictions, are limited to working a maximum of 20 hours per week almost exclusively on campus with little exceptions⁵, and with the university's preference for

¹ See **Preamble to the Constitution of the Graduate Student Organization (GSOC)** and Article I, Section 13(b).

² See [GSO Senate Resolution 23.06](#) "A Resolution Establishing the GSO's Recognition and Support of Syracuse University's Graduate Student Employee Unionization Campaign", passed on 1 February 2023 by the 55th GSO Senate with supermajority support, on which this Senate Resolution is based.

³ According to [Syracuse University Food Services Website](#).

⁴ This was verbally confirmed by the Senior Vice President and Chief Operations Officer, in a meeting with the GSO President and GSO Vice President of Internal Affairs on November 28, 2023 at 10:00 am.

⁵ These restrictions are published on the [USCIS website](#). Briefly, F-1 students may not work off-campus during the first academic year, but may accept on-campus employment subject to certain conditions and restrictions. After the first academic year, F-1 students may engage in three types of off-campus employment: Curricular Practical Training (CPT), Optional Practical Training (OPT) (pre-completion or post-completion), Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Optional Practical Training Extension (OPT). For both F-1 and M-1 students any off-campus training employment must be related to their area of study and must be authorized prior to

work-study students in many departments, these international students are often left with no alternative but to accept food service positions, creating an imbalance of economic forces that disproportionately empowers the employer over these employees; and,

Whereas, the increasing admission of international students to graduate programs at Syracuse University, particularly from countries like India, further exacerbates this imbalance, concentrating power and control in the hands of the university administration over these workers, thereby highlighting the urgent need for equitable labor practices and the establishment of a union protected by law to advocate for the rights and well-being of all student workers, ensuring fair treatment in a work environment that respects their contributions and recognizes their unique circumstances.

Whereas, throughout the 2022-2023 academic year, the GSO Graduate Employment Issues Committee (GEIC) received numerous reports of poor working conditions for hourly food service workers throughout Syracuse University; and,

Whereas, in April 2023, the GEIC conducted a food service worker survey to assess the working conditions for these employees at Syracuse University; and,

Whereas, this survey found that that 60% of respondents find it challenging to maintain a balance across their work, academic, and personal lives due to the inflexibility of their positions, indicating a significant need for more adaptable work schedules that accommodate the diverse needs of student workers; and,

Whereas, at the time of the survey 62% of participants responded “probably not” or “definitely not” to the question “Is the pay you earn from this position sufficient to cover your basic needs?,” and,

Whereas, 81% of participants reported that they are not treated with dignity or respect for the majority of their working hours with 33% reporting that they have never been treated with dignity or respect; and,

Whereas, only 4% of participants viewed Food Service Management as approachable to air grievances; and,

Whereas, a significant and growing number of hourly food service employees on campus have expressed that the establishment of their own legally recognized collective bargaining unit (e.g., a union) would most effectively address workers issues and concerns; and,

Whereas, the establishment and support of unions have been consistently associated with improved working conditions, equitable wages, and enhanced safety measures for workers, including those in hourly food service positions, as demonstrated by research from the Economic Policy Institute, which highlights the broad benefits of unionization not only for members but also for communities and democratic processes, underscoring the crucial role unions play in advocating

for policies that promote economic justice, worker empowerment, and the well-being of workers and their families⁶⁻⁷; and,

Whereas, the evidence suggests that unionization, especially among hourly food service workers, leads to significant advancements in achieving a living wage, comprehensive healthcare benefits, and protections against workplace harassment and discrimination, further advocating for the necessity and efficacy of collective bargaining in addressing and improving labor conditions and rights⁵⁻⁶;

Whereas, an hourly food service worker union would permit student workers to legally negotiate their own working contracts through collective bargaining; so be it,

Resolved, that the GSO formally recognizes the hourly food service worker unionization campaign and supports their right to form a union on Syracuse University's campus, and be it,

Resolved, that the GSO formally makes the following public statement in support of the effort to establish an hourly food service worker union:

In the spirit of fostering a community where dignity, equity, and justice are not merely ideals but lived realities, the Graduate Student Organization (GSO) at Syracuse University stands resolutely in support of the hourly food service workers' campaign for unionization. This movement marks not just a quest for improved wages and working conditions but embodies a profound assertion of our collective values — a testament to the belief that the strength of our institution lies in the well-being of every individual who contributes to its vibrancy. As we champion this cause, we invoke the rich legacy of solidarity and advocacy that defines our academic community, affirming that together, we can build a future that honors the contributions of all workers with the respect, security, and prosperity they rightfully deserve. Let this serve as a strong appeal to our collective conscience, compelling every member of our community to support this initiative. For in championing the rights of our food service colleagues, we reaffirm our shared dedication to justice and the collective improvement of our campus and community.

And be it further, Ordered:

- That the President of the Student Body henceforth use the advocacy powers of their office to support the unionization effort;
- That the Vice President of Internal Affairs and President/Chair of the Senate archive this resolution and henceforth provide institutional support and guidance for the hourly food service worker unionization effort;
- That the Vice President of External Affairs within a week publish this resolution and the public statement on all GSO social media platforms and henceforth provide support through aiding in the circulation of hourly food service worker unionization material and provide guidance for events pertaining to the unionization effort;

⁶ See the [EPI Article](#) "Unions are not only good for workers, they're good for communities and for democracy" by Asha Banerjee et al

⁷ Berg, P. & Frost, A. C. (2005). Dignity at Work for Low Wage, Low Skill Service Workers. *Relations industrielles / Industrial Relations*, 60(4), 657–682. <https://doi.org/10.7202/012339ar>

- That the President of the Student Body, Vice President of Internal Affairs, and Vice President of External Affairs alert hourly food service workers of their right to vote for unionization when a vote is scheduled, providing details around time and location of the election.