

PSRP & SCHOOL HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS

2016 Resolutions

CHAIR - Kristina Schwarzkopf, Toledo #250
Sandra Faulkner, Cincinnati #1520
Lisa Bryant, Cincinnati #1520
Michael Schmitz, Owens Support #6325
Gayle Schmuhl, Berea #1699
Errol W. Savage, Cleveland #279
Cherylane Jones-Williams, Cleveland #279
Patricia A. Forrai-Gunter, Cleveland #279

OFT Staff - Tom Rose

MEMBER ENGAGEMENT 2016

1
2
3 WHEREAS, we are proud members of the American labor movement, and we understand that
4 collective action gives us the power to ensure justice, fairness and opportunity for all; and
5

6 WHEREAS, our union was founded to establish a voice for teachers as workers so they could
7 combat factory-like conditions in our schools, advocate for fair pay and better working
8 conditions, and stand up for greater autonomy as professionals and advocates for their students;
9 and
10

11 WHEREAS, from our very beginning, our union has stood on the side of social justice, fighting
12 racial discrimination, advocating for school desegregation, expelling our own segregated locals,
13 advocating for equal pay and rights for women, defending the rights of those with disabilities,
14 and securing bargaining protections for gay and transgender workers; and
15

16 WHEREAS, today, the Ohio Federation of Teachers (OFT) Paraprofessionals and School
17 Related Personnel (PSRP) and Healthcare Providers is a union of professionals that champions
18 fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and
19 public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to
20 advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining
21 and political activism, and especially through the work our members do; and
22

23 WHEREAS, we are fighting a battle of immense proportions that threatens to destroy all we and
24 others in the labor movement have worked for. This battle is ultimately over who holds the
25 power in our economy and our democracy. It is a battle to reclaim the promise of America; and
26

27 WHEREAS, to combat those who wish to dismantle and/or destroy unions, we must strengthen
28 the bond with all members. We must show them that workers are the union. We must engage in a
29 collective conversation about the challenges we face, the aspirations we have and the strategies
30 we must implement. We must create the collective will and shared avenues for our members,
31 along with community partners, to fight those obstacles and reach those aspirations:
32

33 **BE IT RESOLVED**, that our union will double the number of member activists to 10 percent,
34 triple the number of members who engage in any union activities to 70 percent, and reach out
35 and speak to 100 percent of our members. And while less than 10 percent of those we represent

36 are agency fee payers, we will reach all of them, with the goal of their choosing to have their
37 voices heard as union members; and

38
39 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we will be accountable to each other—activists and
40 leaders on the local, state and national levels—to achieve these goals; and

41
42 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the OFT's officers and the executive committee, in
43 consultation with our local leaders, will put forward an implementation plan that honors and
44 allows for the different local exigencies and conditions among and between different local
45 unions. Such a plan will be considered by the executive council in our October meeting and,
46 building from this, individual local unions shall develop and implement their plans; and

47
48 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the state federation will support this recommitment, to
49 our members, to our families, to our communities and to our ideals in every way possible; and

50
51 **BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED**, that we look forward to taking what was to be—as the
52 Louisiana Association of Business and Industry called it—a "fatal spear through the heart" of
53 labor and transforming that into a revival of the soul of this union, our members. Our soul, our
54 heart, our courage and our power lie with our members and our communities, and always have.
55 Through this journey of engaging with our members and potential members across the country,
56 we will honor and build on the proud history of our union, counter the forces attacking our
57 democracy and our labor movement, and continue to reclaim the promise of America for all of
58 us.

59
60 **BACKGROUND**

61 The promise of America means that, with a good education and a level playing field, you have a
62 shot at achieving your dreams. It means that your babies and young children can grow up in safe,
63 nurturing environments that prepare them for life and learning; that you can send your children
64 to a great neighborhood public school; that you can give your kids the advantage of a college
65 education without incurring crippling debt; that you can get good, affordable healthcare and take
66 a day off when you or your family get sick; that you will be treated fairly at work and get a real
67 raise every once in a while; that you can retire in dignity after a lifetime of work; and that you
68 can live in safe communities, free from physical harm and from discrimination and stereotyping,
69 whether based on race, gender, immigration status, physical disability, religion, ethnicity or
70 sexual orientation.

71
72 The reality of America is—after deindustrialization, globalization and the last recession—our
73 economy isn't working for everyone. Too many are out of work or paid unfairly. Too many are
74 saddled with crippling debt or faced with unaffordable housing. For too many, the American
75 dream is out of reach. Meanwhile, the rich are getting richer and our government is growing
76 increasingly gridlocked as money drives politics.

77
78 We know that when unions were at their strongest, the middle class was at its height. And today,
79 even with the sharp decline in union density, union members make 28 percent more than
80 nonunion workers.

81
82 Corporate-backed politicians want to preserve the status quo and, understanding that unions give
83 working people power, have launched an all-out assault on unions—from statehouses to
84 courthouses. Presently, they are trying to overturn 40 years of legal precedent, challenging the

85 right of public sector workers to organize and raise wages and challenging our unions
86 wherewithal to operate.

87
88 Our affiliates also understand that we only succeed through collective power. Thus, we are
89 engaging our communities, advancing proven solutions, and organizing and mobilizing members
90 to repel those attacks and grow a strong middle class.

91
92 As a result of this organizing and mobilization, the AFT passed the 1.6 million mark last
93 summer. Nurses affiliated with our union, charter school teachers and adjunct professors
94 organized and agency fee payers converted. Therefore the rank-and-file membership continues to
95 grow, as the connection between members and our union is strengthened.

96
97 Where our affiliates are doing this work—side by side with their communities and in line with
98 every level of the union, local, state and national—the connection between the union and its
99 members is strong. We have each other's back.

100
101
102
103 **ENGAGING ALL SCHOOL PERSONNEL IN THE WORK TO**
104 **ELIMINATE CHRONIC STUDENT ABSENTEEISM**

105
106 WHEREAS, educational achievement is a predictor of success in adulthood and chronic
107 absenteeism is a national problem negatively affecting those successful education outcomes, and

108
109 WHEREAS, chronic absenteeism is a challenge as early as preschool and too many students at
110 all grade levels miss 10% or more of scheduled instructional days due to chronic absenteeism,
111 thereby placing them at academic risk; and,

112
113 WHEREAS, chronic absenteeism is not simply a matter of truancy; it is defined as including
114 unexcused absences, suspensions and excused absences, that are often related to illness, poverty
115 and other social determinants of health including a lack of access to needed physical health and
116 mental health supports resulting in further loss of valuable instructional time; and,

117
118 WHEREAS, students only benefit from classroom instruction if they are in class and chronic
119 absence in preschool, Kindergarten and 1st grade is a proven early warning sign that a student
120 will fall behind in reading by 3rd grade and our youngest students are nearly as likely to be absent
121 as teenagers; and,

122
123 WHEREAS, by secondary school, chronic absenteeism predicts course failure and dropping out
124 of school and research connects chronic absenteeism to the school-to-prison-pipeline; and,

125
126 WHEREAS, low income students, students of color and students with disabilities have
127 significantly higher rates of absenteeism in every state; and,

128
129 WHEREAS, President Obama has issued a call to action to improve the lives of all young people
30 through his *Every Student, Every Day* national initiative to address and eliminate chronic
31 absenteeism, recognizing that frequent school absences can be devastating to a child's future
32 success as well as to the future security and prosperity of the nation; and
33

134 WHEREAS, all school personnel play a critical role in reducing chronic absenteeism; and
35

136 WHEREAS, the Ohio Federation of Teachers (OFT) recognizes the need for cross-sector efforts
137 to address this national problem by ensuring that schools, families and communities have the
138 tools, resources and support to make sure students are in school and ready to learn; and
139

140 WHEREAS, interventions occurring on school sites to address asthma, nutrition, safe school
141 climates, oral and dental health, vision and mental health as well as the social determinants of
142 these conditions have been shown to decrease the incidence of absences; therefore,
143

144 **BE IT RESOLVED**, that the OFT continue to support national efforts to eliminate chronic
145 absenteeism, including supporting the efforts of the Department of Education on national, state
146 and local levels as well as Attendance Works, the Healthy Schools Campaign and Trust for
147 America's Health; and
148

149 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the OFT actively promote a shift in the national narrative
150 around chronic absenteeism from blaming families and punishing students for their absences, to
151 one that engages and empowers students, families and communities around the issue of chronic
152 absenteeism and students attendance; and
153

154 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the OFT prepare union leaders to address chronic
155 absenteeism, such as by providing guidance on labor-management approaches, by integrating the
156 subject of chronic absenteeism into relevant bargaining efforts and by highlighting districts and
57 schools that have changed policy and practice to improve attendance; and
158

159 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the OFT champion the role of all school personnel
160 (including educators, school health professionals, paraprofessionals and other support related
161 personnel) in building a culture of attendance, such as by integrating the subject of chronic
162 absenteeism into relevant trainings, by making explicit the need to collect robust data on chronic
163 absenteeism and by engaging appropriate school personnel in the design of early warning and
164 data collection systems, as well as effective and meaningful analysis of root causes and social
165 determinants of chronic absenteeism; and
166

167 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the OFT compile a resource guide describing best
168 practices in the arena of effective programs and methodologies (e.g., alternative conferencing,
169 home visit programs, effective consequences) that lead to improve attendance and a decrease in
170 chronic absenteeism; and,
171

172 **BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED**, that the OFT facilitate and strengthen new and relevant
173 national, state and local community partnerships to address the root causes of chronic
174 absenteeism.