November 10, 2022

Michael Drake, President
University of California
Office of the President
1111 Franklin Street
Oakland, CA 94607

RE: Avert Strikes for 48,000 UAW-represented UC Academic Workers

Dear President Drake,

As members of California’s legislature, we urge you to avert strikes by ceasing to commit unfair labor practices and begin bargaining in good faith with the 48,000 UAW-represented University of California (UC) Academic Workers.

Last week, 35,000 Academic Workers constituting three-fourths of the total UAW-represented workforce at all 10 UC campuses and Lawrence Berkeley National Lab voted to call for a strike in response to the UC’s refusal to bargain in good faith. To avert the strike and the massive disruption that this will cause for the UC system and for the surrounding communities, we urge you to immediately cease committing unfair labor practices as alleged, and bargain in good faith with UAW Academic Workers in all four bargaining units.

The 48,000 UAW-represented Academic Workers — Academic Researchers, Postdoctoral Scholars, Academic Student Employees and Student Researchers — perform the bulk of the teaching and research at the UC system. Their talent, innovation, and labor contributes greatly to the University’s mission and its ability to secure funding. In FY 2021-22, they received $5.1 billion from the state in instructional and research funding.

The UC is one of the top public university systems and research institutions in the world, in no small part because of its ability to attract the most talented scholars from a wide array of backgrounds. But the UC system cannot live up to its mission and reputation if its own employees do not feel respected.

Since UAW began negotiating with the UC last year, the union has filed over 20 Unfair Labor Practices against the University, with many of these resulting in Complaints issued by the Public Employment Relations Board (PERB). It is our understanding that the UC’s unlawful tactics are preventing the UAW from reaching agreements on core issues that address improving gender and other types of equity in academia, including compensation that reflects the value of workers’ contributions, transit benefits that
help fight climate change, paid family leave, and job security. These priorities will help the UC recruit and retain a diverse workforce that reflects the population of California and includes first-generation academics, immigrants, and other historically-excluded groups, in line with our goals as elected officials in California.

As one of California’s largest employers, the UC has not only the opportunity but also the obligation to be a leader in setting industry standards for academia, thus leading the way for other public employers. We urge the University of California to come to the table with the UAW’s four bargaining units in good faith to improve the working conditions of all Academic Workers and implement benefits and compensation commensurate with the immense value they provide the University. By failing to do so, UC is risking mass disruption and losing the talent that has earned UC its prestigious reputation.

Sincerely,

Assemblymember Ash Kalra
27th Assembly District
Chair, Assembly Committee on Labor and Employment

Senator Dave Cortese
15th Senate District
Chair, Senate Labor, Public Employment and Retirement Committee

Assemblymember Tasha Boerner Horvath
76th Assembly District

Assemblymember Reggie Jones-Sawyer
59th Assembly District

Assemblymember Chris Ward
78th Assembly District

Assemblymember Lori Wilson

Assemblymember Tina McKinnor
62nd Assembly District

Assemblymember Laura Friedman
43rd Assembly District

Assemblymember Miguel Santiago
53rd Assembly District

Assemblymember Robert Rivas
30th Assembly District

Assemblymember Carlos Villapudua
11th Assembly District
Assemblymember Mike Gipson

13th Assembly District
Assemblymember Eloise Gómez Reyes

64th Assembly District
Assemblymember Luz Rivas

17th Assembly District
Assemblymember Matt Haney

39th Assembly District
Assemblymember Isaac Bryan

49th Assembly District
Assemblymember Mike Fong

60th Assembly District
Assemblymember Sabrina Cervantes

29th Assembly District
Assemblymember Mark Stone

51st Assembly District
Assemblymember Wendy Carrillo

61st Assembly District
Assemblymember Jose Medina

54th Assembly District

51st Assembly District

60th Assembly District

29th Assembly District

61st Assembly District

13th Assembly District

Assemblymember Luz Rivas

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61st Assembly District
Senator Josh Newman
29th Senate District

Senator Henry Stern
27th Senate District

Senator Robert Wieckowski
10th Senate District

Senator Scott Wiener
11th Senate District

Assemblymember Alex Lee
25th Assembly District

CC: Michael Brown, Provost and Executive Vice President
Tricia Lyall, Interim Secretary and Chief of Staff to the Regents of the University of California
Michael Bedard, Legislative Director, State Governmental Relations