



**For Release after 9 p.m. Friday October 17, 2003**

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On Friday, Oct. 17, members of AFSCME Ohio Council 8, Local 1768 voted against ratifying a new contract with the Hamilton County Department of Job and Family Services (HCJFS).

As a result of this vote, some HCJFS employees may go on strike beginning Monday, Oct. 27. The union had earlier proposed a strike begin on Oct. 20, but the date has been changed.

In the event of a strike, HCJFS will remain open for business at all its locations: 222 E. Central Parkway; 237 William Howard Taft; and the Child Support Cashier's Office at 800 Broadway. Non-striking employees are expected to report to work their regular schedules and HCJFS clients are free to come and go as usual. Under Ohio law, a public employee is not entitled to pay or compensation from the public employer for the period engaged in any strike.

The agency's mission to serve the people of Hamilton County will not be disrupted or compromised should there be a strike.

AFSCME (American Federation of State County and Municipal Employees) represents about 1,000 of the total 1,500 HCJFS employees. Of the approximately 1,000 employees in the bargaining unit, a little more than one-third are union members. The bargaining unit includes employees who provide an array of services to the citizens of Hamilton County, including child protection, welfare, child support and employment services.

The contract between HCJFS and AFSCME Local 1768 expired May 10, 2003. The parties have been in negotiations since April 2003. The parties have followed the process set by Ohio law for negotiations between a public agency and a union and have continued to honor the contract during negotiations.

Following seven negotiation sessions in April and May, the parties went to fact-finding in an effort to resolve outstanding issues. In July, the Board of County Commissioners voted 2-1 to reject the fact-finder's recommendation. The parties conducted post fact-finding negotiations in August with the help of a mediator. Discussions between the parties continued and culminated with a tentative agreement. On Oct. 15, Commissioners voted 2-1 to approve the tentative agreement.

County and HCJFS officials regret that AFSCME members have voted against ratification, but remain committed to efforts to arrive at an equitable contract.

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