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LOCAL 32BJ

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Eric Brakken, District Director

January 9, 2013

Mayor and County Commissioners,

When you vote on the proposed contracts between Broward County and Sunshine Cleaning Systems tomorrow, you will also be deciding upon the fate of health care for 274 men and women who have cleaned the Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood Airport for many years. When they formed a union in 2010, workers were able to move from a health plan with a \$5000 deductible – essentially a catastrophic plan – to a plan with no deductible and low co-pays that has allowed workers to get preventative care from their doctors. Because 32BJ has access to a multi-employer health fund with a large risk pool, this improved health care came at no additional cost to the County.

However, these gains are at risk of being reversed. Over the past few years, Broward County's Living Wage has had 0% increase on several occasions. Beyond impacting the take-home pay of families who live on the edge of the federal poverty line, this has also had the effect that the County's health care differential in the Living Wage has stayed well below the real increases of health care costs during that time.

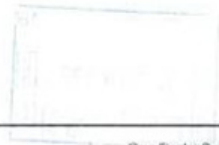
According to a December 2012 study published by the Commonwealth Fund ([www.commonwealthfund.org](http://www.commonwealthfund.org)), average premiums for employer-sponsored family health insurance plans nationwide rose by 74 percent nationwide between 2003 and 2011. In Florida, average premiums for individual plans rose by 45 percent, while those of family plans increased by 58 percent during the same time, and premium costs have continued to increase since 2011. By comparison, the rate of the health insurance differential in Broward County increased by 15% during the same time period.

This creates a growing gap between the average cost of private health insurance for individuals in Florida and the amount that the Broward County Living Wage provides to buy it. In the past couple of years, Sunshine has contributed money from its margins to cover the gap, but the longer that this broader problem goes unaddressed, pressure will increase to take workers out of a quality health care plan and to return to a plan with high deductibles and co-pays that are unaffordable to workers. We calculate that there is a gap of \$1,736,805 over the next three years between what Broward County's Living Wage allocates to health care and the cost of workers' health plan.

We hope that the County Commission can address this situation when it considers Items 31A and 31B, and keep working families from the prospect of losing their health coverage during this holiday season.

Sincerely,

Eric Brakken  
Director



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