

Jewish Labor Committee

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PJLC Statement on Perelman Jewish Day School

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Parents and community leaders have reached out to the Philadelphia Jewish Labor Committee regarding the Perelman Jewish Day School board's unilateral withdrawal of union recognition and refusal to bargain with the teacher over the terms of a new collective bargaining agreement.

The Philadelphia JLC stands firmly with the teachers and their union as they fight for their collective bargaining rights, and also in alignment with tenets of Conservative Judaism.

By dismantling the union and denying employees the power of collective bargaining, the Perelman Jewish Day School is acting in opposition both to major halakhic authorities and to the official position of the Conservative Movement.

In 2008, the Conservative Movement's Committee on Jewish Law and Standards passed a teshuvah (legal position) which obliges institutions affiliated with the movement to comply with a series of Jewish labor laws. Among these, employers must pay a living wage and "may not interfere in any way with organizing drives."

This teshuvah draws upon a consistent line of rabbinic authority dating back to the Talmud. The third century Mishnah and Tosefta instructs employers to meet or exceed local custom in terms of wages and benefits, and the Babylonian Talmud gives town residents the right to intervene between a local employer and a worker to insure that wages are fair.

In 1945, Rabbi Eliezer Waldenberg, a leading Israeli Ashkanzi scholar and posek (authoritative adjudicator of questions related to Jewish law), recognized the right of workers to organize and to have their regulations and rules seen as binding. He also recognized, in certain conditions, their right to strike.

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (1895–1986), a Lithuanian Orthodox rabbi, scholar and posek, concurred in a series of Responsa that extended Rabbi Waldenberg's holding to include the right of workers to prevent scabs from doing their jobs and to include the rights of



religious school teachers to bargain collectively, even though community funds and the religious obligation to teach Torah were at stake.

The Perelman Jewish Day School has based its identity on a fidelity to halakhah and derekh erez. We call upon the school's administration to bring this same dedication to its obligations as an employer of teachers who work hard every day to make the institution a center of Torah.

Jewish tradition has been clear and consistent—the treatment of workers and their right to organize are among the basic underpinnings of a just society. We therefore call upon the Perelman Jewish Day School to reverse their decision and begin to bargain with the teachers union over the terms of the next collective bargaining agreement. ”

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