

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 17, 2008

CONTACT: Mark Naccarato

615-218-0282

LOCAL 205



SEIU®

Stronger Together

School Employees Union Supports Later School Start Date Citing Lower Costs, Better Conditions for Children, SEIU Backs "Save Our Summers"

NASHVILLE, TN – Service Employees International Union ("SEIU"), Local 205 today confirmed their support of HB 3125, which would establish a uniform school start date no earlier than August 15 for all of Tennessee's public school students.

"Our children, teachers and school employees are needlessly suffering in hot buildings and on hot buses," said Michael Thomas, a member of the union who works at New Dotson Elementary in Nashville. "A school start date of August 15 or later would also mean less days for students riding in a bus when the inside bus temperature is 95 degrees or higher."

SEIU spokesperson Teresa West says the uniform school start date would provide for a later school starting date and the school year could end by late May. She says this would allow school employees to have a full summer to prepare for the upcoming school year or to work a second job over the summer to increase their income.

According to SEIU, as the summer vacation has gotten shorter, many employees are working non-stop just to get the schools ready to open on time. As a result, some critical maintenance work may not be fully completed, which could place staff and student safety at risk.

SEIU also maintains that a school calendar that begins in early August and has many vacation days scheduled between the first and last day of school increases non-instructional costs for school districts. "Because of the current 'early calendar', taxpayers are paying more for air conditioning the schools and the buses and we end up getting less academic service for our students and less benefits to our valuable school employees," says Ms. West.

The union also cited a recent poll conducted by SurveyUSA which showed that a strong majority of Tennesseans supported reform in school start dates. 71% of Tennesseans polled on the issue supported moving the public school start date to the last weekend in August or later. Three out of five who were polled supported a uniform school start date that would be applied to all county and city school districts in the state. "The people of Tennessee – both parents and those without children in the school system – want this legislation passed," says Thomas. "It's time that the people's voice be heard on this issue."

SEIU members plan to be present to voice their support for HB 3125 when it is up for discussion in committee on March 18 at the Legislature.

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SERVICE EMPLOYEES
INTERNATIONAL UNION,
LOCAL 205
CTW, CLC

521 Gallatin Ave.
Nashville, TN 37206

615.227.5070 / office
615.227.7674 / fax
800.447.1330

www.SEIU205.org

