



# Teamsters at First Student East Penn Strike for a Fair Contract

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More Than 135 School Bus Workers Reject Latest Offer From Company

ALLENTOWN, Pa., Oct. 28 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- Private school bus workers that serve the East Penn School District in Lehigh County, Pennsylvania went on strike this morning after overwhelmingly voting down the latest contract offer from First Student. The union is filing unfair labor practice charges against the company this week for changing terms of the workers' employment during contract negotiations.

Drivers, aids and mechanics at the East Penn First Student yard joined Teamsters Local 773 in Allentown, Pennsylvania in January 2009, securing a strong partner to help negotiate a contract that would address a number of issues in the workplace. However, despite seven months of negotiations, the company hasn't proposed a contract that addresses the workers' concerns.

"These workers perform an invaluable service for the school district, but receive compensation that is the lowest in the county," said Dennis Hower, business agent and Vice President of Local 773. "We have spent the last seven months trying to negotiate a fair proposal from First Student, but have yet to receive a suitable offer from the company. Our members feel like they have been ignored and marginalized by First Student."

This is the second contract the bus workers have voted down since negotiations began. The East Penn yard was a Laidlaw facility prior to First Student's acquisition of one of its primary competitors in the private school bus industry. Many workers feel that things have gone downhill since the company took over.

"We want First Student to recognize that every bus worker in Lehigh County deserves to be treated equally," said Manuela Kucharczyk, a 12-year driver and member of the negotiating committee. "We joined the Teamsters because it seemed like after First Student took over, the company was more interested in taking things away from its workers rather than making sure they were treated with respect. We want to make sure our issues are heard."

Founded in 1903, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters represents 1.4 million hardworking men and women in the United States, Canada and Puerto Rico.

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