

The Committee of Interns and Residents (CIR/SEIU) is the largest resident physician union in the United States, representing close to 41,000 doctors doing their medical training. CIR submits this testimony in strong support of Resolution 26, which would designate May as Labor History Month in NYC public schools.

CIR members train in the communities where labor history was made. In 1959, mostly Black and Latino hospital workers in NYC, many of them women and immigrants, went on strike to win the right to organize. These workers were earning poverty wages with no union protections, working in the same hospitals that would later become training grounds for CIR members. Their fight led to the formation of their union and transformed what it means to be a healthcare worker in NYC. That history lives on today, in the institutions where we train and provide care. Our patients are descendants of that community and of the workers whose collective action built this city and many of the rights we enjoy today, like workplace safety, the right to organize, and child labor laws.

As union members, we understand what collective power makes possible. We have fought for better working conditions, patient care funds that benefit the communities we serve and the right to advocate for patients beyond the walls of the hospital. Our union is the vehicle for advocating for our patients, our communities and ourselves.

Young people in NYC public schools deserve to learn this history. They deserve to know that hospital workers in their neighborhoods (just like their teachers) organized, took collective action and won. Labor history education also has the power to expand how young people understand who workers are. Doctors are workers too, we organize, bargain collectively, and fight for our patients through our union. Teaching this to students can expand their definition of who the labor movement is for and who it serves.

I would be honored to support this resolution.

As a resident physician and proud union member of the Committee of Interns and Residents or CIR, I believe recognizing Labor History Month in NYC public schools is an important step toward educating students about the role organized labor has played in improving workplace safety, fair treatment, access to healthcare, and workers' rights across generations.

For resident physicians, unions like CIR have been instrumental in advocating not only for fair working conditions, but also for patient safety, physician wellness, educational protections, and equitable healthcare systems. Many people do not realize that physicians in training often work long hours under high levels of responsibility while caring for vulnerable communities throughout New York City.

Teaching labor history gives students an understanding of how collective advocacy can positively impact communities, public health, and working families. It also highlights the importance of civic engagement, solidarity, and protecting the wellbeing of essential workers.

I strongly support this resolution and appreciate Councilmember Avilés for advancing this important initiative.