Kriss Worthington
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ACTION CALENDAR
December 17, 2013
(Continued from December 3, 2013)

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
From: Councilmember Kriss Worthington

Subject: Support UAW Local 5810 Efforts to Secure Healthcare Cost Reimbursements from the University of California

RECOMMENDATION
Support UAW Local 5810 efforts to secure healthcare cost reimbursements from the University of California and send a letter to Janet Napolitano, President of the University of California and the UC Board of Regents requesting that the University reimburse postdoctoral researchers for necessary out-of-pocket healthcare expenses.

BACKGROUND
UAW Local 5810 represents nearly 6,000 postdoctoral researchers across the 10 University of California campuses. The 2010 contract between the university and the union provides for a specific healthcare plan for these workers.

The union claims that a group of workers (mostly comprised of those on immigrant guest-worker visas) were misinformed of the benefits available to them. This was a direct violation of the negotiated contract by the union and the University of California. They then purchased separate plans on the open market. In response, the University of California offered early open enrollment in May, but the union claims that 135 workers "are owed more than $400,000 total in premium payments they should not have been required to make.[1]"

According to the union, the university has been engaged in stonewalling tactics by cancelling meetings, and not reviewing the details of the case.

These workers have already made sacrifices by earning much less than they would in the private sector. If the claims are true, some researchers lost out on hundreds of dollars, and in some cases thousands of dollars. The workers deserve to be compensated for this mistake and to be treated fairly.

[1] Landa, Jeff. "Union calls on UC to reimburse postdocs for health care costs." *The Daily Californian*. 10/28/13. http://www.dailycal.org/2013/10/28/union-calls-uc-reimburse-postdocs-health-care-costs/

The City of Berkeley should stand up for worker rights and send a letter to Janet Napolitano, President of the University of California, and the Board of Regents supporting these workers in their request to be reimbursed for unnecessary costs.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS
None.

CONTACT PERSON
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Attachment:
1. Letter to Janet Napolitano, President, University of California Board of Regents

Janet Napolitano, President
University of California
1111 Franklin St.
Oakland, CA

Dear President Napolitano,

The Berkeley City Council requests that the University of California respond to the requests by UAW Local 5810, representing nearly 6,000 postdoctoral researchers, for the reimbursement to its union members for out-of-pocket healthcare costs.

The Berkeley City Council regrets to hear that 135 postdoctoral researchers, including 114 at UC Berkeley, are owed reimbursements of nearly $400,000 towards out-of-pocket medical expenses they made. These researchers deserve to be treated fairly and given reimbursements for the payments that they made due to miscommunication.

Researchers make tremendous contributions towards the wellbeing of this university, while making remarkable sacrifices. These researchers have secured millions in funding for the University of California while providing it with cutting edge scientific research for which they are known. However, many make far less in salary than they would in comparable jobs in the private sector. Many are recent immigrants, in the country on guest-worker visas. In the time that these researchers had to pay out-of-pocket, they bore severe financial burdens and many of their children and other family members went without coverage.

Every month this goes unresolved, the financial burdens to these workers will continue to grow. The University of California should live up to its reputation as a world-class university which treats its employees with fairness and dignity and attracts the best and brightest academics in the world. Thus, the Berkeley City Council requests that the University of California fulfill its responsibilities to treat these workers with the fairness they deserve and reimburse them for their costs.

Sincerely,
Berkeley City Council