

Madison May Day Caravan: Demands workers' rights, protections, support

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MADISON, WI, April 30, 2020, 7 p.m. CST – On Friday, May 1st, a vehicle caravan will circle Capital Square in Madison, demanding that workers be protected physically, mentally, and financially during the current COVID-19 health crisis. “May 1 is International Workers’ Day and A Day Without Immigrants, so we are organizing a caravan to show our support for the Stay at Home order and the rights of all workers, regardless of immigration status,” says Laura Valderrama, a Shorewood Hills elected official and an organizer of the Madison May Day Caravan. “We are calling on our leaders to protect the people of Wisconsin by providing hazard pay and PPE for all workers, emergency relief funds for those who’ve lost their jobs or are underemployed, a moratorium on rent and mortgage payments, and BadgerCare for all.”

Larissa Joanna is a laid-off restaurant worker and a member of the Restaurant Workers Coalition, which is advocating for the rights of restaurant workers, including undocumented workers. She plans to participate in the caravan. “The undocumented are not getting any type of protection, no emergency drivers licenses, no PPE, and no relief funds. But not getting enough is true of most workers now. All workers need PPE, hazard pay, and free health care.”

Ron Rosenberry Chase is chief steward of Communications Workers of America (CWA) Local 4671 at the Wisconsin Frontier Communications Assignment Center in Sun Prairie, and will be participating in the caravan. “Our technicians have only been getting two face masks for weeks. They had been going into peoples houses all the time, but the workers complained vociferously, and management had to

respond, so they are now going in only if a modem has to be programmed on-site,” says Chase. Chase knows of telecommunications technicians across 26 states who are refusing to go into work. “I am hoping that workers in Wisconsin taking off tomorrow, whether authorized or unauthorized, will participate in to caravan and show their support for all workers who must report, often under dangerous conditions.”

Luke Eckenrod is a Madison-based organizer for #RentStrike2020, a national campaign calling for suspension of rents, utilities, and mortgages while the crisis is going on. This campaign is fits with the demands made by the caravan. “What we’re demanding is an extensive relief package for workers, including rent suspension. With workers atomized during the lockdown, it’s important that we show unity in collective action, and that we are not taking this lying down.”

The caravan will meet at the parking lot of the Madison Labor Temple, 1602 South Park Street, Madison, on Friday, May 1st, with a scheduled departure to the capitol building at 12 noon. The expected first arrival at Capital Square is 12:15 p.m. A Facebook page for the Madison May Day Caravan is at <https://www.facebook.com/events/1555869417898682/>