
October 24, 2019

RE: Letter of Support

Dear Madison Cooperative Development Coalition,

I am writing this letter on behalf of Worker Justice Wisconsin (WJW) and in support of the Iron Roots Cooperative restaurant.

WJW's worker center has long been the primary resource for the most vulnerable workers in Madison, interacting with about 500 workers every year. Two-thirds of the workers we meet with each year are immigrants. 70% earn \$10 or less per hour. Their top concerns and industries have remained fairly consistent over the years: Top issues in 2018 were wage and hour complaints (31%); discrimination (21%); injury, safety and health (13%). Top industries were janitorial/cleaning (20%); restaurant (19%); manufacturing/warehouse/production (14%); construction (9%); home/healthcare (8%).

WJW serves many workers in the restaurant industry, a sector with rampant exploitation and wage theft. We began working with the Iron Roots group earlier this year when they came to the center with a shared concern of unethical treatment of employees and feeling both underappreciated and underpaid at work. They were tired of the company CEO's always excluding them from important decisions regarding their career and workload and they were seeking information about their rights, trying to figure out what options they had and most notably- they were looking for a resolution. They were immediately drawn to the idea and option of forming a worker cooperative and were eager to learn more. WJW has provided these workers with a safe place to organize and plan. Our advocacy team has provided both individual and team training support about worker cooperatives, as well.

We are excited to continue to support Iron Roots as they create an exception to the restaurant rule- a workplace with fair wages, job security and dignity, where workers have a voice on the job. We will support them by channeling restaurant workers we help to the better jobs Iron Roots will offer, providing information and training on workers' rights and safety, and spreading the word about the work they are doing in order to drive people to patron the Co-op. We are grateful for the opportunity to support them in the development and sustainability of this much needed alternative.

We look forward to continuing our partnership with MCDC to support Iron Roots. Please don't hesitate to contact us with questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Kristen Taylor

Kristen Taylor
Worker Center Manager