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November 8, 2017

President Lee C. Bollinger
Office of the President
Columbia University -202 Low Library
535 W. 116 St., MC 4309
New York, NY 10027

Dear President Bollinger:

I am writing to urge you to support the rights of all working people on your campus to come together and form unions.

As you know, unions help advance the dignity and economic position of workers by allowing them to collectively bargain for better wages, benefits and working conditions. Unions not only play a critically important role protecting and strengthening America's middle class, but when unions are strong, the economic gains are spread throughout the economy to union and non-union members alike.

As an internationally prestigious institution of higher learning, I hope very much that you will set an example throughout the world by supporting the democratic decision made by graduate students and teaching assistants who voted to form a union. To appeal this decision to an anti-worker, Trump-appointed National Relations Labor Board is not something that a world class institution of higher learning should do.

In just the last year, graduate worker unionization elections took place at 13 major universities, including your own, and involved more than 18,000 total eligible voters. To my mind, it would be a huge mistake to attempt to roll back these workers' rights to organize. It is critically important that colleges and universities recognize the significant contributions these workers make by supporting their right to form unions and engage in collective bargaining.

I have long worked with full-time and adjunct faculty at the University of Vermont and the Vermont State Colleges who are members of unions. These individuals are more invested than ever in the important research and teaching they do, precisely because they have a greater voice in the workplace. The same goes for unionized support staff and graduate workers.

I urge you to support the legal rights of research and teaching assistants at your university to form unions and bargain in good faith with them. After all, these workers are key to the success of your university. Thank you for your attention on this important matter.

Sincerely,



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator