

Application for JCRT board

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To: Ben Sommer <bsommer@somervillema.gov>;

2 attachments (37 KB)

Rand Wilson bio.docx; Rand Wilson resume.docx;

Dear Mr. Sommer,

I am applying for a Local Nonprofit seat on the Jobs Creation and Retention Trust board. I am interested in serving on the board because I have been actively working to improve and retain jobs in the City of Somerville for many years.

As a union organizer and resident concerned about job quality, I have fought to improve our existing municipal ordinances concerning living wages and responsible contracting. I was a leader in the campaign to win passage of Somerville's wage theft ordinance. I have campaigned with workers at Assembly Sq. to get employers to pay \$15 an hour and helped lead the recent signature campaign in Somerville for ballot initiatives to win paid family leave and a \$15 an hour minimum wage statewide. I was similarly involved in an earlier campaign to win earned sick time. I have actively campaigned throughout the city, and with the Mayor and the Board of Aldermen, to win better job standards and increase local hiring for construction workers and other jobs on Somerville projects with city or state subsidies. I was a strong advocate for creating the Jobs Trust and passage of the home rule petition for the linkage fee.

I currently serve as the chief of staff for SEIU Local 888. I am the President of the Center for Labor Education & Research, board chair for both the ICA Group and the Local Enterprise Assistance Fund. I am also a leader in Somerville Stands Together, a community-labor coalition working to win more affordable housing and better jobs in the community through advocacy and organizing.

The most important lesson that I have learned in my 40 plus years of experience, is that government can play an important role in winning better jobs when local elected officials, members of oversight and planning agencies, and boards such as the Jobs Trust work with residents, business owners and managers, unions, and local nonprofits with a shared commitment and strategy to improve wages and working conditions. The business and real estate development process in particular is the most important time to win strong commitments from employers for local hire and job quality standards. The process of attracting and incentivizing business development affords a unique opportunity to use the levers of government and community organizing to win significant concessions from business. There is a growing movement across the country and throughout Massachusetts to pair development along these lines with legally enforceable Community Benefit Agreements that have provisions for affordable housing and jobs.

The biggest threat in our labor market is stagnant wage growth and deteriorating benefits and working conditions. Everywhere business is booming yet workers wages are not keeping up with increased profits and rising productivity. It has led to staggering levels of income inequality. For far too many workers, the political system appears to have been hijacked by the billionaire class and the economy feels rigged. The old adage, "A fair day's pay for a fair day's work" is no longer true. To the extent that we continue on this trajectory, it provides a dangerous breeding ground for demagogues and extremists to prey on

workers legitimate frustrations.

I want to serve on the Jobs Trust board because I strongly believe that there is a role at the municipal level for the Trust to use its resources in ways that will improve workers local job opportunities and give them a better advantage with employers to gain the good jobs our community desperately needs. More job training and better pathways to good careers are an important task of the Trust. But our community's vision for the Trust should also include developing consensus on community job standards and a citywide strategy to lift wages and improve working conditions. The Trust can convene workers and community leaders to flag areas where government enforcement has been lax or weak. The Trust can bring together high road employers to showcase practices that other employers could implement. The Trust can encourage alternate business models by stimulating growth in worker ownership and an emerging "solidarity economy" in Somerville.

As you can see from my attached resume and bio, I am well qualified to work with other board members to implement and oversee great programs to improve job retention, stimulate creation of new jobs and empower workers in Somerville.