September 5, 2023
LightHouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired
1155 Market Street, 10th FL
San Francisco, CA 94103

Dear Sharon Giovinazzo,

We are excited to inform you that a majority of employees at LightHouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired have joined together to form a union—LightHouse United—with the Office and Professional Employees International Union (OPEIU) Local 29.

Over the past year, staff across every department have gathered to discuss what we love about our work, and have come together as a larger unit to agree that a union will empower us to better pursue our shared mission at the LightHouse. We believe that we, as staff with expertise in serving blind and visually impaired residents, should have a voice in making the policies that shape our workplace conditions.

Forming a union will promote transparency, ensure equity, increase staff well-being and retention, and add to the long list of reasons why we are proud to work at the LightHouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired. The LightHouse’s mission statement seeks to “promote independence, community, and equity created by, for, and with people who are blind or have low vision.” It is with these core values in mind that we have invested efforts in organizing with our colleagues, as a direct reflection of our commitment to our work and our organization’s guiding principles, including:

- **Independence**
  - Unionizing allows us to rethink the barrier between staff and management, so that regular staff can have a meaningful say in decisions that affect them and benefit the organization collectively. The best way to help the communities we serve is to ensure that the workers in our organization are in a good place themselves - with stable, secure jobs. We are eager to collaborate with management to promote a worker-centered workplace through our union, and feel that it is important to empower all workers, giving every staff member a seat at the table.

- **Community**
  - Establishing this union would build an active culture of collaboration and help avoid isolation across departments and work locations. Unionizing is a way for employees across the organization to come together, regardless of their physical workplace. LightHouse’s organizational SMART Goals seek to “strengthen existing LightHouse Relationships—both internal and external,” and a union will enable us to do just that. Our union will enable us to come together to negotiate our contract, thereby fostering open communication among the entire staff of the LightHouse. It will create growth through educational opportunities and professional development to the staff, as well as wraparound services to the blind...
community. By moving forward collectively, we will truly live the mission of the LightHouse.

- **Equity**
  - We believe that all LightHouse employees—from factory workers to executive leadership—should receive equal treatment. We believe that all employees should receive a Bay Area living wage and yearly cost of living and merit raises that account accurately for inflation and appropriately reward employees for their hard work.

Voluntarily recognizing our union paves a way for employees and management to work together, helping the LightHouse live up to its mission by creating a workplace that is equitable for everyone.

Each of us feels a deep sense of gratitude for the work that those in senior leadership have done to build this institution and make it a place that inspires us, our students, and our broader community. We believe that the LightHouse is a place where leadership is open, receptive, and collaborative with staff. To unionize is to explicitly embrace those values and continue to work in good faith with one another. We also acknowledge that the staff working directly with our clients and students should share a voice in shaping the organization’s policies, and unionizing is a meaningful way for us to do just that.

Today, we reflect upon the words of Helen Keller, who wrote, “Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.” Together, we are claiming our collective voice and exercising our legal right to unionize and create a LightHouse, United.

We look forward to receiving your response to our request for voluntary recognition by Friday, September 8 at 5pm. If you are willing to discuss a voluntary recognition process, please contact our Organizer at OPEIU Local 29, Andom Kahsay at akahsay@opeiu.org or by phone at 510-393-1505.

LightHouse United Union Members