

## Union Settles Membership Lawsuit, Refunds Hartford County Nurse's Dues | RELEASE

### The Fairness Center

Contact: Conner Drigotas, 844.293.1001, [cddrigotas@fairnesscenter.org](mailto:cddrigotas@fairnesscenter.org)

### **Union Settles Membership Lawsuit, Refunds Hartford County Nurse's Dues** *SEIU District 1199 forced to acknowledge nurse's resignation, return dues with interest*

**February 11, 2019, Hartford, Ct.** – For nearly three years, Hartford County nurse Cheryl Spano Lonis was trapped in a union she wanted no part of. Despite her attempts to resign, union officials forced her to remain a dues-paying member, taking a cut of every one of her paychecks.

Now, after Spano Lonis filed a federal lawsuit late last year with the Fairness Center's help, the union, the New England Health Care Employees Union, District 1199 (SEIU 1199NE) backed down, agreeing to settle the lawsuit by acknowledging her resignation and refunding her money—with interest—going back to October 2015. The union agreed to repay Spano Lonis over \$2,500.00 seized from her wages against her will.

“I objected to funding the union on religious grounds, but union officials ignored my beliefs, taking and spending my money as they saw fit,” commented Spano Lonis. “I’m pleased my hard-earned money will be returned to me rather than used to fund union priorities. My lawsuit finally forced them to take me seriously. While I achieved my goal, I should not have had to take these steps in the first place. I hope the union treats other workers better.”

“Union officials violated Ms. Spano Lonis’ First Amendment rights by forcing her to remain a union member and taking dues from her wages against her will,” commented Nathan McGrath, the Fairness Center’s Vice President & Director of Litigation. “This settlement upholds her rights and restores money that should never have been taken from her in the first place.”

The lawsuit was filed in federal court in the District of Connecticut on October 27, 2018.

### **Documents:**

- [Complaint](#)

Fairness Center Vice President and Director of Litigation Nathan McGrath is available for comment. Contact Conner Drigotas at 844.293.1001 or [cddrigotas@fairnesscenter.org](mailto:cddrigotas@fairnesscenter.org) to schedule an interview.

###

*The Fairness Center is a nonprofit public interest law firm offering free legal services to those hurt by public-sector union officials. For more information visit [www.FairnessCenter.org](http://www.FairnessCenter.org).*