Brothers and Sisters of Grand Rapids ATU,

I have heard sad news that several hundred people in Grand Rapids, Michigan, have been denied a promise made by their employer, a public agency funded by taxpayers like you and me. The transit workers at The Rapid were told when they started their jobs that they would receive a defined benefit pension when they retire. Now a boss who makes more than $200,000 is reneging on that promise, telling these hard-working Michiganders that they either need to gamble their retirement security on the stock market or get nothing at all.

Let me be absolutely clear: when you put the pensions of working people at risk, you are making inequality worse, not better. You are making these families and the communities they support weaker, not stronger. That is not the America we want.

Grand Rapids has an astoundingly high poverty rate of 26%, far higher than the national average, which makes maintaining these middle class jobs and benefits more important than ever. When you raise the fares by 16% in the same meeting that you give the CEO a $4,000 a year raise, there's a problem. You are taking from the working people of Grand Rapids to give more to the wealthy. This is making inequality in Grand Rapids worse.

Enough is enough.

These attacks follow an unfortunate nation-wide trend of cuts to mass transit, pensions and social security. I have fought these attacks my entire political career and the America that my campaign is fighting for is one where all people can retire with dignity and security, not just the millionaires and billionaires.

I am proud to stand alongside the working families of Grand Rapids and to remind their management that pensions are a promise! Real change never occurs unless ordinary people stand up and fight back. Now is that time.

BERNIE SANDERS
UNITED STATES SENATOR