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**OP-ED: IBEW LOCAL 1289 ASSISTANT BUSINESS MANAGER CALLS ON JCP&L  
TO HALT MEASURES AGAINST EMPLOYEES VOLUNTARILY SEEKING HELP WITH  
SUBSTANCE ABUSE ISSUES**

As the Assistant Business Manager of IBEW 1289, I feel compelled to present my opinion and address a troubling issue regarding the policy of one of our Local's employers, Jersey Central Power & Light (JCP&L). Specifically, this serious and troubling matter concerns the disparate treatment of fellow IBEW members who voluntarily seek help for substance abuse issues.

Recently, I've been made aware of the circumstances faced by individuals who courageously self-recognize their need for assistance and voluntarily enter treatment programs. Rather than supporting these employees, JCP&L is isolating them and compelling participation in the company's EAP, as a condition of continued employment. Ultimately, the company's actions are a counterintuitive and demeaning and are undermining members' efforts to rebuild their lives.

Upon completing their voluntary treatment programs and expressing their readiness to return to work, these members are immediately referred to the company's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) under the guise of "help" and "treatment oversight." However, this isn't about genuine concern for "fitness for

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duty” or an action of support; it's about subjecting them to tests and burdens that prolong their absence from work. This is forcing them to exhaust sick leave, adding to their financial stress, and embarrassing them in front of their co-workers. Sadly, the way the company is treating these members is likely to discourage others from seeking the help they need.

What's particularly distressing is the lack of transparency regarding this policy, which is hostile to persons in recovery. Further, this treatment is inconsistent with and in contrast to the company's handling of other health conditions covered by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Individuals with substance abuse issues are singled out for intensive monitoring, while those with other medical conditions, such as diabetes or heart disease, are not subjected to similar scrutiny.

The company tries to excuse its actions by claiming substance recovery issues are beyond the company's control or that the imposed conditions for continued employment are standard practice is neither rationally supported nor unacceptable. These individuals are self-motivated as demonstrated by their voluntary participation in recovery programs. It's time that we hold JCP&L accountable for its counterproductive and callous disregard for the well-being and dignity of its employees who are responsible and voluntarily seek recovery assistance. No individual should be subjected to humiliation or degradation for seeking help and making efforts to better themselves.

In Solidarity,  
Jeff Munyan  
Assistant Business Manager, IBEW 1289

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