



AFSCME IN ACTION

Member Newsletter | June 2023

Congratulations Walters Workers United: Another Win for Cultural Workers!

On Thursday, June 15th, nearly 80 museum workers at the Walters Art Museum overwhelmingly voted to form their union with AFSCME Maryland! Workers voted 60 to 5 in favor of their union, and the new bargaining unit will consist of staff from retail operations, conservation, curatorial, safety and security, building operations, marketing and communication, installation and collections, learning and community engagement, and others.

The members of Walters Workers United (WWU) have been organizing for over 2 years to address concerns regarding health and safety, pay equity, a voice in the workplace, and more. They fought steadfastly for a wall-to-wall union – one union for all workers across the museum. Now, they join workers at the Baltimore Museum of Art, the Enoch Pratt Free Library, and the Maryland Office of the Public Defender, who have all won union elections with AFSCME Maryland in the past year!



“ It takes a certain kind of bravery to question the status quo and a certain kind of courage to envision a more inclusive future where we can collectively advocate for ourselves. We have accomplished a lot in these long two years, and now I’m ecstatic to see how we will make the Walters an even better institution for ourselves and our community.

Garrett Stralnic
Gallery Officer, Walters Art Museum

“ This is a culmination of so many folks’ hard work, from all corners of the institution. From Security to Conservation to Maintenance, we really did it! I am proud to be a part of a huge change for the Walters Art Museum, and this is a considerable step forward towards equity, transparency, and accountability.




Lex Reehill
Monitor Room Officer, Walters Art Museum

Upcoming Events

Union Night at Camden Yards
Friday, July 14 at 7:05 PM
More details at www.afscmemd.org

AFSCME Maryland Special Convention
Saturday, July 8
Hanover, Maryland

AFSCME Members in Action

-  On June 1, AFSCME members attended an Introduction to Our Union training. Members had a chance to learn more about their union contract, how to get more involved in their local unions, and how we can continue to build power in our movement for the raises and respect we deserve!
-  Local 434 President Bryan Epps and Local 3478 President Rownite Stevens attended AFSCME's National Organizing Summit in Denver, Colorado in early June. During the summit, they discussed organizing strategies, building their own locals, and how to support one another in our movement for the pay, respect, and workplaces we deserve.
-  At the beginning of June, AFSCME Local 1678 held a three day "Get Paid, Get Smart" event featuring various tables and workshops so that AFSCME members could learn more about their workplace rights and benefits. Over 110 people showed up to the event, and it was an awesome way to engage both members and non-members alike and show the support and resources that are available through a strong union.



Pictured: Local 1678 member leaders at the event

Member Spotlight: Lori Kershner

Every morning, Lori Kershner, a member of AFSCME Local 3644, heads to the Bel Air Multiservice Center, where she works as an office secretary for the Maryland State Department of Education's (MSDE) Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS).

Her work helps those with disabilities find jobs and gain a sense of independence, but sadly, the condition of the state building that she works in often doesn't support this important work. For years, the building has lacked adequate janitorial services and failed to comply with modern ADA accessibility standards, making it hard to serve community members seeking services and support.

But in the past year, Lori has taken action, forming a health and safety committee with the support of her local and getting MSDE and the Department of General Services (DGS) management to commit to addressing these issues. MSDE and DGS have since started to implement routine vent cleanings and HVAC servicing, replace old and damaged ceiling tiles, install power assist buttons, and more. **"I educated myself about what needed to be done, I read our union contract, I talked to others, and through my union, which has been an amazing resource and support, we've gotten things done," says Lori.**

For Lori, fixing these issues will mean that the building will be safer for everyone inside, including both her coworkers at the many state agencies operating inside the buildings as well as all of the clients they serve. **"From this experience, I've learned that we have to keep pushing the decision makers and pushing forward. Even though the changes might not be immediate, having that hope that things will be better through the work me and my union are doing keeps me going."**

When asked how she hopes to invite her other coworkers to get involved, Lori says that it's important for them to know that "all of us collectively make a difference. One of us standing by ourselves alone will get nowhere. But as a whole, we can get somewhere and bring forth a positive change for ourselves and our jobs."



Pictured (left): AFSCME Local 3644 member Lori Kershner