

Baltimore City Council – Taxpayer Night
May 15, 2025
President Bryant testimony

Good evening Council President Cohen and council members,

My name is Dorothy Bryant, and I am privileged and honored to serve as the proud president of AFSCME Local 44. AFSCME Local 44 members are working hard day in and day out for the public services in our city and public schools. Our members work to keep our kids safe; we strive to keep our public schools and city streets clean and in good working order, we ensure our children are well fed, our parks are well maintained for our community, and so much more. Without the work of our members this city could not run. Our members love what they do but they also face steep demands and challenges with their jobs.

First, despite being essential to the functioning of our city and public schools, too many of our members do not earn a living wage. Too many of our members are barely making more than the minimum wage. Many of our members must work multiple jobs to make ends meet and provide for their families. Hard-working and loyal people who have served our children and the city for decades should not have to work multiple jobs to barely stay afloat—their jobs for the public service should sustain them. It is more troubling that the City has had in its possession, for nearly a year, a salary study that will most certainly shine a light on wage inequities our members endure, yet we still have not received it. We call on the City Council to release this salary study.

Second, in addition to low wages, our members also struggle with health and safety issues on the job—whether they work for our city or our schools. Extreme heat, poorly functioning equipment, or acts of violence are all hazards our members face--conditions that present real risks to their lives and their health. More must be done to create a healthy and safe working environment for our public employees including adopting and implementing a heat stress standard that will protect all city and public school employees.

Finally, the city and our school board must commit to offering permanent employment opportunities for public services rather than contracting out work that could be done by permanent employees. Contracting out public services does not save money, and in many instances, costs more with worse outcomes.

Our union is negotiating in good faith with the city and our school system to address these issues and more. We are fighting for higher wages, expanded health and safety protections and training, and pathways for contracted out workers to become permanent employees, so they may have the same workplace protections and benefits as union-represented employees. We urge the City Council to support these efforts and reach an agreement with our union that honors the work of our members and creates prosperity for our dedicated public employees. Thank you.