

My name is Allison Gulick, I live in District 11 and formerly worked at Walters Art Museum for 5 and a half years as the Community Programs Coordinator in the department of Learning and Community Engagement, formerly the Education department. At the museum, the Education Department handled, and continues to facilitate a majority of the museum's public facing programs. The department formerly included the following internal units: Family Programs, School Programs, In-Gallery Learning, and Adult and Community Programs. In my former role as the Community Programs Coordinator I assisted with the Thursday evening programs for our adult audiences and created community programs to facilitate connections with communities not already accessing the museum's offerings through partnerships with Baltimore organizations like the Enoch Pratt Free Library, the Peabody Conservatory, and the Latino Providers Network. I also implemented large-scale community celebrations that consistently brought thousands of guests into the museum annually to experience our collection and corresponding cultural traditions, like our Día de los Muertos Celebration, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day, and off-site, community festivals taking place in Baltimore neighborhoods.

In the last 20 months, Learning and Community Engagement, has gone from being a large department of 25 employees to 6. Multiple long time employees, including one who had worked at the museum for over a decade were terminated without cause. Even with this greatly reduced staff the museum has pushed the department to keep producing a schedule of programs and offerings reflective of a full staff, while only operating at 23%. Staff capacity is low across the museum and there is little urgency to assist in the planning or promotion of the programs the department is being asked to create.

The programs I facilitated, as well as those developed by my colleagues in other units of the department, are frequently leveraged by the museum to appeal to donors. There is limited transparency around what's included in final applications for funds and the reports back to grantors; on multiple occasions staff have asked to see these documents and have been blatantly ignored. The museum rightfully celebrates that its educators use their expertise to create and implement programs that help the public make meaningful connections with the works of art in the collection and the museum itself as one of Baltimore's anchor institutions. But, if museum leadership truly respected the work of educators, then why has the department consistently suffered from job insecurity, lack of resources, rapid turnover, and chronic understaffing?

Museum staff as a whole are overworked and underappreciated, with most of us living paycheck to paycheck and many folks having to take on second jobs to make ends meet. Museum staff are highly skilled and critically important to the continued operation of this public institution, which is such a rich asset to our city. I urge you to support the Walters Workers United and amend this municipal code to include the Walters in the city's collective bargaining clause.

My name is Anthony Venne and I live in the 3rd District of Baltimore and have been a resident of Baltimore City for over 14 years. I have been employed by the Walters Art Museum for a little over 13 years in the Marketing and Communications Department. I strongly support unionization at the Walters because I love this museum and this city.

For many years I've witnessed dwindling health and compensation benefits, lack of consistent pay increases, and no transparency in the institution's pay structure. We have rarely had a consistent method for performance evaluations or communication about how to succeed in order to advance our careers. I hope that unionization will bring consistency and transparent compensation for ALL of the Walters staff.

Thank you for taking the time to hear the needs of city museum employees. Unionization will ensure a more equitable workplace for all of us. We need a municipal code amended to grant us collective bargaining now. Please urge the Walters Art Museum to voluntarily recognize us or discuss a fair and inclusive process so we can be all in one union.

October 13, 2021

Good Morning Councilmembers:

My name is Aric Dietrich and I live in the 12<sup>th</sup> district. I have been with the Walters Art Museum for three years, initially as a volunteer and now as a full-time staff member. I support the Museum Workers' Right to Organize because I believe my colleagues deserve more transparency and better communication from their direct leadership.

Again, I appreciate this opportunity to present my thoughts and hope that you will amend the municipal code, therefore granting us immediate collective bargaining. Ideally, we want the Museum to voluntarily recognize us or, at the very least, discuss a fair and inclusive process so that we can form a single union.

## The Walters Art Museum Building Operations Division Testimony

At the Walters Art Museum, we are “at will” employees and can be fired without cause or reason. Staff will disappear and no one knows why. This has led to a very stressful work environment. With a union and a strong contract, employees will have due process, which will allow them time to correct the behavior before terminating employment.

Understaffing and high turnover puts more work on current employees but no compensation for the extra work. Even after decades of service, some members of our team still need a second job. We need a union because you should be able to live on wages from one full time job.

We cannot keep employees because of our poor pay and tense work environment.

Brian Braxton - Engineering Technician

Jemal Cherry - Maintenance Technician

Jessica Figard - Building Operations Coordinator

Thelma Mitchell - Maintenance Technician

Will Murray - Lead Maintenance Technician

I'm Dylan Kinnett. I've worked at the Walters Art Museum for 13 years. I live in the same district as the museum, the eleventh.

My work at the museum is web development. I am lucky to work with one of the most beautiful things in the museum, the knowledge. Online, the Walters is exemplary among museums. We share images and information about Baltimore's treasures with a global audience of millions, for free and without restriction. I work with technologies that extend the Walters' mission to be free and open with that knowledge.

Free and open, we say, but increasingly, unfortunately, not transparent.

The museum has written that it "embraces being an institution that creates space for dialogue" with the public. Inside the museum however, there's no embrace of dialogue with the workers. As for the public, nearly all of the workers who facilitate public discussions have been suddenly terminated with no invitation to adjust their course. As you'll hear from my colleagues, there are grave concerns about working conditions, fair pay and equal treatment, job security, and more.

You'll also hear about the many times we've asked museum leadership: extend the open and public mission by having a conversation with us about how our work is done. Their response, when there is one, is opaque. In our staff meetings we do not "meet" each other, we receive lectures. Our electronic communication happens from the top down or not at all. Decisions, clearly the work of very long planning are suddenly announced, occasionally contradicted, unevenly enacted... we're bewildered.

If those of us who work here are kept in the dark about the museum's decisions, or even afraid of them, we're not in a position to enact those decisions in the public interest. Even when we can assume good intent, how are we to further that intent if we don't know what it is? Our conversation is about more than policy and procedure. It's absolutely about our work and our livelihoods, but it's also about a mission that we support, but we need to do it in collaboration with the leadership.

As a union we will become a partner in the public work of the museum. We have questions. We have input. We too have knowledge. We're here because we want to contribute.

Today we seek your help to create a structure of our own, a union, so we can be true stakeholders in the future of the Walters Art Museum.

32 Silversage Court  
Cockeysville, MD 21030

October 14, 2021

Re: 21-0050R – Museum Workers’ right to organize

Thank you City Council Members.

My name is Ellen Hoobler and I live in Baltimore County. I have been working at the Walters Art Museum for nearly 5 years now and work in the Curatorial department.

I support unionization at the Walters because in just the few years I have worked at the Walters, so many hardworking colleagues I knew have been fired without much, if any notice, and the effect of our colleagues “disappearing” is very demoralizing. This was especially true during the pandemic, when several members of the Education department who I knew to be hardworking and dedicated were let go. I want the Walters to be as good of a workplace as it can possibly be, and I know that will be aided by unionization.

Thank you for taking the time to hear the needs of city museum workers. Unionization will ensure a more equitable workplace for all. We need the municipal code amended to grant us collective bargaining now. Please urge the Walters Art Museum to voluntarily recognize us or discuss a fair and inclusive process so we can all be in one union.

Johanna Biehler  
The Walters Art Museum  
In support of AFSCME

I am supporting a union at the Walters Art Museum because it will give employees a voice at the table with pay negotiations, allow for a more transparent salary structure, and provide more job security.

## 21-0050R – IN SUPPORT

All workers deserve a union and the Walters Art Museum workers have collected a supermajority of support for one. I believe in the power of a strong democracy, including and especially in the workplace. As someone who tried to organize their workplace and was forced out by a harsh union-busting campaign, I am also strongly opposed to the use of public funds on union-busting consultants. What these workers are doing is not just courageous, but necessary for the progress of society. The Walters workers– *all* of them– deserve a union. Solidarity forever.



I wish I could be with you to testify this morning, but submit this written testimony in support of amending the Baltimore City code to include staff at the Walters Art Museum in collective bargaining through the Office of the Labor Commissioner.

My name is Marta Zoellner, and from October 2014 to August 2020, I lived in District 3. I worked at the Walters for over 8 years in the department formerly known as Education. My responsibilities included working with volunteer tour guides, leading art-making with student groups, managing college interns, scheduling tours, and compiling data for end-of-year funding reports. During my time, the department went from a height of 15 full-time and 15 part-time staff down to a current level of 3 full-time and 3 part-time. Turnover was constant, and at the time of my departure this July, no one had been hired since January of 2020. Currently, there is 1 person doing the work that my team of 5 did when I was there.

Before leaving the museum, I served on the Walters Workers United Organizing Committee. When asked why we needed a union, I always pointed to the immense skillset and knowledge-base of our staff. A museum includes many highly specialized jobs, and there is no way that 1 or 2 people at the top can know all the intricacies that go into their staff's everyday work. As a result, it is crucial that staff at all levels have a voice in decision-making that impacts their work. After years of staff voice being ignored by leadership, a majority of us came together to form a union. This was not easy work, and we did it on top of an already heavy workload. That's how bad things had gotten.

A few examples:

Last spring, a teammate who I worked with for 7 years was fired out of the blue. I had sensed some tension between her and those above us in the hierarchy, but she had not received so much as a written warning. I spoke with her a few months after she was fired, and she told me she still didn't fully understand why she had lost her job. This is what it means to be in an "at-will" workplace: you can be fired for no reason other than a higher-up not liking your approach, or feeling threatened by your ideas.

Many years ago, I spoke to a security officer who thought it would be festive to hook up the TV in the break room to show one of those yule log screensavers at the holidays. The next day, their supervisor addressed the whole team at their morning meeting, threatening whoever had done this with disciplinary action. The remote to the TV was then taken away, with the TV set to 24 hour news. As anyone who has lived in the world for the past 5+ years knows, the news is not necessarily a relaxing accompaniment to break-time. I was horrified, and wanted to bring this up to someone, but the officer asked me not to, reminding me that their boss would be able to review the tapes from cameras in the museum and see that we had spoken. That is just one example of the culture of retaliation and fear that the security team experiences every day they come to work at the Walters.

Protecting our security team is one of the main reasons WWU is asking for this amendment, rather than filing for an election with the National Labor Relations Board. After the union at the

Portland Art Museum in Maine won their election as a wall-to-wall unit, management successfully appealed to have security officers broken away from the rest of the bargaining unit. When this happened, the WWU Organizing Committee realized the NLRB was not a viable path for our union election. Gallery officers at the Walters make up a huge portion of union-eligible staff at the Walters, and are some of the most vulnerable to mistreatment. During my 8 years with the Walters, I always felt comfortable speaking up when I saw a problem or had a concern. Colleagues in security do not feel the same way. They experience retaliation from their leaders if they voice concerns. Staff cannot protect one another if they aren't able to unite and stand together. An election through the NLRB does not allow for that, but an election run through the Baltimore City OLC does. I urge you to move quickly to approve this amendment or otherwise assist in verifying that there is majority support for a union at the Walters Art Museum.

The Walters Art Museum has great potential to be a transformative force in the lives of Baltimoreans, but only if everyone is working together and is treated with respect. I worry every day about those I left behind at the museum. They deserve a union to ensure their voices are heard and their rights and livelihood are protected.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and all the hard work you do on behalf of the citizens of Baltimore.

As a former front line employee of the Walters Art Museum, I support Walters Workers United. The workers have a right to organize a union to advocate for basic needs such as pay equity and safe working conditions.

Equal pay for equal work does not currently exist at the Walters. As a part time employee, I was paid a much lower rate than my full time counterparts, despite performing almost identical job duties while on the clock. Additionally, a holiday pay rate is granted to full time employees that work on bank holidays. Part time employees are not given an increased rate for working the exact same holidays as full time employees. I was only informed of this after I worked a full holiday and my paycheck was much less than I had planned for. I witnessed my former coworkers in other departments, such as education and security, experience similar pay inequities. During my time at the Walters, many employees were terminated with little reason and little warning. I watched as the education department got smaller and smaller due to layoffs and resignations, while the workload remained the same. The few people that were left on the team were expected to do the work of a team 3x their size, with no increase in pay. Gallery officers were subjected to sudden and unexplained changes in policy regarding sick days and time off.

When the Walters began reopening during the pandemic in fall of 2020, hazard pay was discontinued for the front line workers despite the increased risk of exposure to Covid-19 as visitor numbers began to rise. As more visitors came into the museum, we were being paid less for the extra work it took to combat the pandemic on a daily basis, mental and physical distress we experienced, and actual danger we were putting ourselves in. Vaccines were not available to everyone at that time.

The workers of the Walters Art Museum deserve the opportunity to advocate for their safety and wellbeing. They deserve to be paid for the full value of the work they do for the organization, and in turn, for the city and community of Baltimore. The employees of the Walters Art Museum deserve to be in the room where decisions are made about their everyday lives.

Sam Slottow  
Former Employee

Thank you City Council members. My name is Susan Wallace, and I have been working at the Walters Art Museum for 29 years, currently in the Department of Conservation, Collections, and Technical Research.

I support unionization at the Walters because after many years at the museum I have become increasingly dismayed by the growing lack of empathy on the part of senior management towards the rest of the staff. Time after time, senior management has dropped the ball when it comes to staff safety and wellbeing, while paying lip service to caring and appreciation. Most recently, when toxic fumes entered the museum from roofing repairs, it took days for senior management to accept that there was a problem and to act. Security staff, especially, were required to stay in areas, including being stationed inside elevators, where it was patently not safe to be. Other longtime staff has been given salary caps and required to sign letters saying they were okay with this (the implied alternative being termination). It is time for a union at the Walters.

Thank you for taking the time to hear the needs of city museum workers. Unionization will ensure a more equitable workplace for all of us. We need for the municipal code to be amended to grant us collective bargaining now. Please urge the Walters Art Museum to voluntarily recognize us or discuss a fair and inclusive process so that we can all be in one union.

## Security Testimony

Gallery Officers are the first people that greet you when you visit the Walters Art Museum. We have many roles, from welcoming guests, to wayfinding, to upholding COVID-19 protocols, to protection of artwork. As you make your way through any gallery, you are likely to be met by an officer with a smile, a helping hand, and fascinating information about the collection.

Despite this critical role, the Security Department has been consistently undervalued, underpaid, and overworked. COVID-19 made these issues clearer than ever before.

During the COVID-19 shutdown, essential staff saw a consistent mishandling of safety procedures. It took several possible exposures to coronavirus for the museum to enact proper contact tracing and notification of exposure. There was also a sluggish response to acquiring personal protective equipment (PPE), and an absence of manager/director-level support when it was needed most. Directors and Managers all worked remotely, with little communication to their staff, while essential personnel in their departments came to work daily during the peak of the pandemic. It was scary to come to work and not know what you were bringing home to your loved ones. It was scary having a leadership team that seemed unconcerned with our well-being.

The Security department has extensive knowledge of the day-to-day functions at the Walters, but this expertise is not valued by museum leadership. When the museum planned its reopening after COVID-19 shutdowns, no security officers were included on the Reopening Committee. This led to several issues regarding capacity limits, bottlenecks in smaller galleries, and stress on the officers. Had our experience with public museum spaces been considered, many of these issues would not have occurred.

Even after the Walters reopened to the public, and after committing to greater transparency and concern for its staff, museum leadership faltered again. Weeks went by without communication to staff about the risks associated with [organic vapors coming from roofing repair](#). Despite multiple employees going home early with headaches, vomiting, and other symptoms of exposure, it took 50 Walters' employees coming together to send a letter to museum leadership before action was taken. We feel that our safety is not a priority. Our safety is non-negotiable.

As it stands now, if we go through the NLRB, Security would not be able to form a bargaining unit with the rest of our colleagues in the museum. Our work is inextricably tied to our coworkers in other departments, and it is important to us that we are able to unionize with them. Having our election run through the city will ensure that we are not left out and left behind.

We need to be able to advocate for and protect ourselves. Every day, we work to ensure that the museum can be a welcoming and secure place for everyone. Our job is linked to our colleagues in every corner of the institution, and our collective voice as museum professionals deserves to be heard.

Through unionization, we will gain that voice. The following testimony is a compilation of many gallery officer and monitor room officer voices. We are concerned about our health and safety, voice at work, respect, job security, short staffing, flexibility, and hostile management.

#### *Health and Safety and Lack of Voice*

It is no secret that the Walters has made errors in their COVID reopening plans, dealing or lack of upper management dealing with organic vapors when roofing work was being completed. More recently, there was a lack of enforcement at a large wedding that was held on the premises.

“During the COVID-19 shutdown, essential staff saw a consistent mishandling of safety procedures, sluggish response to acquiring PPE, and an absence of manager/director-level support when it was needed most. It was scary to come in every day and not know what you were bringing home to your loved ones. It was scary having a leadership team that seemed unconcerned with our well-being. I don’t ever want us to go through that again.

The Walters went weeks without communicating to all-staff about the risks associated with vapors even when multiple employees went home due to side effects. It took a large number of us coming together to send a letter for management before management took action, which makes me feel that my safety and my co-workers’ safety is not a priority. Our safety is non-negotiable. This is exactly why we need a union at The Walters now. We need to be able to advocate and protect ourselves since it’s clear they won’t.”

– Lex Reehill, Monitor Room Operator, 5 years at the Walters, City Council District 14

“When the museum was working on its reopening plans after COVID-19, front-line staff were absent from the Reopening Task Forces/Committees. The people working with visitors, in a forward-facing role, did not have an opportunity to weigh in on important decisions that affected them, despite having the most institutional knowledge.

If we were included from the beginning, many issues such as visitor-staff conflicts, capacity limitations, social distancing problems, could have been lessened or eliminated altogether. Those who are affected by policy changes need to be present in the conception of the change for a better, and more functional workplace.”

– Garrett Stralnic, Gallery Officer, 2+ years at the Walters, City Council District 14

#### *Poor Management/Short Staffing/Turnover*

“Full-time Officers have no choice but to work 16 hour days when the museum rents out their space. Officers will have to come in and do a regular 8-hour shift, and then go directly into an 8 hour wedding (of which conditions were worrisome and would fall under troublesome workplace conditions). The museum does not consider the toll a 16-hour day has. They do not consult us. Instead, they tell us this is happening. If one person is already off, everyone else has to work during these instances. Management expects us to work from 9am until 1am and then show up the next day at 9am again. There is no sign-up

sheet. There is no discussion on closing the museum for the day before the wedding. There is nothing that could be seen as working with or protecting the officers who make it possible for the museum to have these events. There is also no reflection on their part when it comes to staffing and understanding what it takes to properly staff during events or weekdays. This poor planning and poor management is reflected in their haphazard decisions that make no sense which only impact us.”

– Jordan Robinson, Gallery Officer, 2+ years at the Walters, City Council District 12

“I have worked at the Walters for 20 years and now make \$15 an hour. Even though one of my major concerns here at The Walters is communication, I’m still seeing security treated differently such as when working a post because someone is off or on vacation, etc. Security is not given the same treatment such as making sure they get a break, as well as a lunch break. I understand that we are short-staffed in security, but I have witnessed several times when working short still making sure 5 West gets breaks that I know others do not get when we are covering that post.

Being part time at The Walters I don’t have leave time, PTO, etc.. Right now, I never know when I may have to take off. So, I have to think way ahead of time, especially with doctors’ appointments, family death, among other emergencies.”

Robert Watson, Part time Gallery Office, 20 years at the Walters, City Council District 11

#### *Disparities between Departments/Inability to use earned paid time off*

At the Walters, only one officer may have a planned absence per day. We are one of the largest departments. Can you imagine what this means for holidays, weekends, and other times when multiple people may need time off?

“We’ve been on a hiring freeze since before the pandemic, which means we are very understaffed. So, we were given a schedule with certain “black out days” we aren’t allowed to take off. I have been denied PTO for the date of my brother’s wedding. Since then, I have been denied PTO several times.

Also, when it comes to taking sick days, we have to call the security director. He consistently has a skeptical attitude, as if he has to decide whether he believes we’re sick or lying. This demonstrates the security director’s heartless inflexibility. We earn our PTO time, and if we don’t use a certain amount of it, we lose it. We should be able to take time off when we need it.”

- Ben Stiegler, Gallery Officer, City Council District 12

#### *Managerial level harassment, favoritism, hostile work environment*

“I recently had an experience with the director of the department that has left me shaken. I have never felt more disrespected at work, let alone from someone that is supposed to be leading our team.

The security team was alerted that we were to switch from our summer shirts to our winter shirts two days before the actual change. Even disregarding the failure in communication, this provided a problem

for me because my basement had recently flooded. Unfortunately, I was not able to salvage all my winter shirts, so I needed to get three replacements.

My direct supervisor and I called the director to ask for replacements. He was skeptical. He told me that my shirts would affect the budget and he would have to consult with the Director of Operations and Deputy Director (title for Kate Burgin). I asked if he wanted to come see the shirts after he asked for pictures. He agreed and I hung up to await his arrival.

When he arrived, he began yelling and pointing his fingers in my face. He did not let me speak. He said, "Don't you ever hang up on me again!" I only ended the call when we had established, he was on his way. Even if I had hung up on him mid-sentence, the way he addressed the situation and berated me in such an aggressive and hostile way (not even considering that he is my director) was beyond inappropriate. This behavior occurred with multiple staff (including the Director of Operations), supervisors and visitors present. He used words such as "get her out of my sight" and that I was "bothering him". At this point I was trying my best to keep from breaking down into tears. I was scared and felt like I had no recourse. Immediately after this incident, I needed to report back to my post.

I was inconsolable. I couldn't stop crying, let alone do my job at that point. I couldn't clear the imagery of him looming over me. Over 3 shirts.

I documented the incident with Human Resources that day. A few days later I met with HR. The representative spent the meeting giving me reasons why I needed to have empathy for a director who was acting inappropriately and creating a hostile and toxic environment. I cannot help but wonder who HR is looking to protect, our director and the business, or employees like me who are vulnerable.

I cannot express the number of times that I have heard and witnessed first-hand this specific director act in a hostile way. He has had a history of poor behavior which includes many complaints to Human Resources and to upper management. Nothing has ever been done.

Human Resources told me that I had nothing to fear. I continue to come into work, as I must make ends meet; but I am scared. I do not feel safe from our director, nor do I feel protected by Human Resources. Our director is a large man—one that I feel is unpredictable and without reins—who threatened and abused me over a problem partially created by his lack of communication."

- Rashonda Hough, Gallery Officer, 2 years at the Walters, City Council District 9

### *Long Awaiting Answers*

Rewind to two years ago, this same supervisor sent an email on 12/8/19 which required that all gallery officers be required to work on 12/10/19. Not only were we negatively affected by this short notice that we had to report for a day that we usually have off, but we had to deal with hostility due to some people being unable to work on that day. Blackout dates came as a result of this and took even more flexibility away, allowing no officer to request these days off instead of the already inflexible one officer absence allowed. This supervisor sent us an email claiming that he will be "tracking the call offs" of those who call



out on a series of new blackout dates. This language of intimidation is similar to his comments made in a security only meeting that same day in which he said he would “investigate” our call outs.

On 2/19/20 security had a meeting with Rebecca Cassinova and Kathleen Bashim raised these and other concerns after the security team wrote a collective letter to Human Resources. Security was informed that they were opening a hostile environment investigation.

Human Resources conducted a series of follow up zoom meetings during the beginning of the closure of the museum and has not made efforts to provide updates to the investigation since.

*“Investigations” with zero follow-through*

“During my time at the Walters I witnessed and was subjected to hostility, bullying, retaliation and gaslighting by management. The workers tried every available recourse to bring change and remedy the situation; but were ignored, silenced and intimidated at every turn. I really enjoyed my job at the Walters but chose to leave in order to escape the toxic environment created and supported by upper management. The Walters needs a union so workers can feel safe and secure in their working environment. The Walters needs a union, so workers aren’t afraid to stand up for themselves.

- Ashley Jones, Former Gallery Officer, 2 years at the Walters, City Council District 1

“I love the people I work with in the security department. When workplace problems did arise, however, it was difficult to get management to take them seriously. I saw many of my friends and colleagues take issues to management, only for those problems to be brushed aside or left without clear resolution. When those important issues weren’t settled, staff ended up discouraged about their value to the organization and the original problems persisted. Forming a union would ensure that staff have a formal structure through which they advocate.”

- James Girolamo, Gallery Officer, 2 years at the Walters, City Council District 11

*Lack of voice in issues and inability to speak out*

“Having the support of representation as a whole is incredibly important. During the earlier stages of COVID-19, after the museum decided to re-open, without frontline staff input regarding any part of that decision, it was also declared to us on the frontline that our “hazard-pay” would be discontinued. We expressed our disagreement with that decision and asked for clarification and transparency as to why it had been made. Clarity regarding the finances of the museum was not available to us until after that decision went into effect.

During the time leading up to the cessation of hazard-pay, upper-management also made the decision to call “hazard-pay” “appreciation-pay” instead. We, in security, also voiced a strong opposition to that term, citing the gaslighting nature of management trying to change the perception of why we were being paid more during that time, as well as trying to decrease the focus on the actual hazard we were facing each day.

The museum email system was first used by me and then others, to voice concerns to decisions being made by museum management. At this point we were prohibited from sending emails to entire departments outside of security citing in the "Electronic Mail Policy," that email "should not detrimentally impact employee productivity" and, apparently, upper management deemed our professional communications regarding our concerns about pay, our health and safety, and transparency from management as detrimental, even though the response from individuals in other departments was overwhelmingly supportive.

Also during this time (late October 2020-early November 2020), while in the midst of heightened awareness by those in other departments of what we, in security, were going through, many of us in security were individually pulled off of our posts in the middle of the day, without forewarning, and escorted by the head of our department into a "secret" meeting with the director of the museum and the director of HR, to "discuss our concerns and theirs." Between the surprise of being pulled from our assigned posts by the director of our department, to being escorted by him without any verbal acknowledgement of where we were being taken, to then being ushered alone into a room where the director of the museum and the director of HR sat in wait – all of this was an incredibly intimidating tactic that spoke volumes as to upper-management's methods of communication and to their approach to dealing with personnel. It's worth noting that the museum has time and time again treated Gallery Officers and Monitor Room Officers differently than any other staff. Despite others also speaking in support of us, themselves and the safety of all staff, we were the only ones pulled into these captive audience meetings. You should know, we are often the most vulnerable staff at the museum. We are thought of and treated as disposable and invisible. I should also mention that I am a black woman. Most Walters staff are white. However, many of the front of house staff (security, retail and maintenance) are people of color.

Having a union would significantly decrease management's ability to intimidate and gaslight staff. Unionizing would support us all in obtaining, not only the pay equity we warrant, but the respect we deserve."

- Merle Davison, Gallery Officer, 3 years at the Walters, City Council District 1

### *Pay Inequity*

"On January 5th of this year I found out through the press that our wages were going to be raised to \$15 per hour for full-time staff. At the same time, we lost the mandatory overtime of 4 extra hours per week. After taxes, I'm bringing home at least \$50 less for each of my biweekly paychecks... that's a utility bill.

In addition, what's upsetting to me is that at least one of my coworkers who has been working the same position as me at the Walters for well over a decade was being paid under \$15 an hour before this change was made. Now my coworker and I make the same amount and I just don't think that's right. Folks have invested decades of their lives in the Walters, there was nothing done to compensate people according to how long they have been working here, they just raised wages and I don't see that as achieving pay equity or fairness."

– Garrett Stralnic, Gallery Officer, 3 years at the Walters, City Council District 14

“Employees need to be actively involved in the decision-making process that affects their job. During our first return from being at home during the pandemic, the administration selected an arbitrary date to cut hazard/appreciation pay despite the pandemic numbers being the worst they had ever been. I asked Julia, the museum director if she believed I was going to be properly compensated at \$12.15 an hour to be at the museum in the height of the pandemic. Julia answered that she believed everyone was adequately compensated. She also stated losing our hazard pay wouldn't affect our ability to get into work safely. The power to determine our wages shouldn't lie with the people that don't understand how the lack of a fair wage affects someone's health, safety, and overall quality of life.

If the personnel that work front of house were included in planning and staffing considerations, logistical failures like coverage and policy enforcement would happen less often. A union will bring all parties to the same table to work together and see that we are adequately compensated for the important job that we do to keep the space safe.”

– Jordan Robinson, Gallery Officer, 2+ years at the Walters, City Council District 12

*A union that includes us all, keeping standards high*

“My name is Lex Reehill and I work in the Security department as a Monitor Room Officer. My colleagues and I manage alarm and fire systems, museum access, and emergency response. I have worked at the Walters Art Museum for five years.

A wall-to-wall union is crucial for the betterment of the employees at the Walters. As Security officers, it is our duty to protect the people and the artwork of the institution, but we do not get the same consideration. Security is often treated like an afterthought by museum management.

Earlier this year, the Walters announced a pay floor increase for full-time staff to \$15/hour. This information was welcomed, but something was missing. The pay floor increase did not include an equitable increase for existing staff. After five years of working at the Walters, I make the same amount as someone who is hired today. My specialized knowledge as a long-time employee and Monitor Room officer, who is cross trained to work in gallery spaces, is not reflected in my pay. It feels as though my dedication to the museum is not valued, despite being an essential worker required to work through blizzards and pandemics. My colleagues and I deserve equitable pay that is informed by our experience, and the additional duties we must perform.

For the past year, several of my coworkers have left due to the above reasons. They have since been replaced by contracted security officers from the company GardaWorld. These officers are not trained with the same rigor as a Walters Security officer, often a single day versus two weeks per gallery post. They can also be swapped to a different site at any time. Due to this, they cannot obtain the institutional knowledge (such as employees' faces and names, or history of the museum and the collection) that is necessary to maintain the high standards needed of our positions. Many key duties, such as ensuring reports are correct and responding to emergencies in a timely manner, have fallen on the remaining

Walters' Security officers. The uncertainty of our jobs being outsourced has caused a great deal of stress for the Walters' Security officers, with no clarity being given by management. The hiring freeze that was in place during the pandemic was lifted, and there are still no new Walters Security being hired. Officers are being denied the ability to take their Paid Time Off due to the staffing shortage, leaving them even more burnt out. We are in desperate need of reliable, well-trained, and committed people to assist us in our job duties, which affect the entire museum ecosystem if they are not performed properly.

Unionization will help us, as well as our colleagues in other departments that have similar stories, get accountability and clarity for how the museum decides to move forward post-pandemic. Over time, I have seen many, many passionate and hard-working people leave due to dissatisfaction, mistreatment, and pay inequity. A union will give us our voice back. It will help advocate for those who have been consistently put aside. Our experience has value. A union will create the best Walters Art Museum."

– Lex Reehill, Monitor Room Operator, 5 years at the Walters, City Council District 14