

Press Release:

Philadelphia Museum of Art Union AFSCME District Council 47

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For immediate release: PHILADELPHIA MUSEUM OF ART WORKERS FORM UNION

Today, staff from across the Philadelphia Museum of Art (PMA) announce our intent to unionize in affiliation with AFSCME DC47.

We have collected authorization cards from a supermajority of union-eligible staff and are requesting voluntary recognition from the museum's senior management. Voluntary recognition of staff unions has been granted recently at other cultural organizations, including the LA Museum of Contemporary of Art and The Shed, and clears the way for more expeditious and collaborative bargaining.

The Philadelphia Museum of Art serves the people of Philadelphia, and we must emerge from the COVID-19 crisis as a safe, accessible, and equitable place where all Philadelphians can engage with the arts. For this to be possible, working people must have a seat at the table in museum decision-making. By unionizing, we are taking important steps to ensure that the eventual reopening of the museum prioritizes visitor and staff safety; to empower staff in the face of incidents of harassment and discrimination like those publicized in January of this year; and to prevent the financial impact of the museum's closure from landing on the programs that serve our community and the workers who are already the most vulnerable. It has never been more important for workers to have a say in our own working conditions, especially when our workplaces are also public spaces.

We are facing challenges that our institution and city have never faced before. We know that whatever the future brings, we will be better able to face it with an empowered workforce that can bring all our passion and creativity to bear in service to our community and collection. We are eager to take on these challenges in solidarity with one another and in cooperation with management, executive leadership, and the Board of Trustees, which is why we have requested voluntary recognition.

The new PMA Union will be affiliated with AFSCME DC47. District Council 47 of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME DC47) represents workers at several Philadelphia cultural organizations, including the Free Library of Philadelphia and the Philadelphia Zoo, as well as about 6,000 other professional workers in the city's public and private sectors. AFSCME is the leading union for representing museum professionals nationally and covers workers at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Brooklyn Museum, American Museum of Natural History, Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art, Museum of Tolerance, Milwaukee Public Museum, and other institutions.

We are unionizing to win a seat at the bargaining table, to have a say in the decisions that impact our lives and livelihoods, and to ensure that the PMA continues to be a leader in Philadelphia and the nation. We are unionizing out of love for the arts, the museum, and each other.

We hope that museum leadership and our Board of Trustees will see that a unionized workforce will create a stronger, more resilient museum, and look forward to voluntary recognition and a collaborative bargaining process.

