



Kat Cancio
(845) 271-9651
kcancio@afscme.org

Workers at the Enoch Pratt Free Library seek union recognition

Workers at Baltimore City's public library join a growing wave of organizing in the Baltimore area.

Baltimore –Workers across the Enoch Pratt Free Library (EPFL) system on Wednesday announced their plan to form a union with AFSCME Council 67. The new union, Pratt Workers United (PWU), would cover employees at EPFL's Central Library and 21 branches throughout Baltimore, and be the latest campaign to empower workers at a Baltimore cultural organization.

According to Pratt Workers United's (PWU) mission statement, the group aims to make the library a place "that prioritizes respect, accountability, and transparency toward its employees and toward the public" by securing a voice on the job, better wages and benefits, health and safety protocols at work, and transparent hiring practices. Workers also want to secure a voice in the library's decision-making process.

Alayna Baron at EPFL's Hamilton branch said she wants to see the ideas and needs of herself and her coworkers taken seriously. "Workers in the branches hold expert knowledge about the neighborhoods in which we work," she said. "But big decisions are made without our input, and we're shuffled around between locations without our consent. It's dehumanizing and I'm burned out. If I'm not taken care of, how can I take care of my patrons?"

Baron says she has witnessed many of her co-workers experience burnout and mistreatment. "When the power is back in the hands of Pratt workers and our community members, all of us will benefit," she said.

"We've also seen employees threatened with retaliation and getting disciplined or fired where there appeared to be no just cause," said Raye Howard, a security guard at the Edmondson Avenue branch. "We need a union to ensure that we have basic job security and that decisions are made based on what is good for the library, its employees and the communities we serve."

Masetsaba Woodland, who works in the Central Library's collection development department, put it more simply: "This is about dignity. Everyone deserves to be respected at work"

Pratt Workers United says the majority of workers have already expressed support for a union across the EPFL system. The group plans to officially notify library administration of their intent to form a union and will seek voluntary recognition in the coming week.

For updates on the Pratt Workers United campaign visit www.prattworkersunited.org or follow @prattworkersunited on Facebook and Instagram and @prattworkers on Twitter. To sign their community letter of support visit [www.https://www.prattworkersunited.org/community-letter-support](https://www.prattworkersunited.org/community-letter-support).