

AUGUST 31ST, 2021

# AFSCME 3 NEWSLETTER

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## AFSCME Members Fight for \$15 and Respect at the University System of Maryland and University of Maryland Baltimore

Members from AFSCME Local 1839 rallied on Monday, August 16th, to demand the University System of Maryland increase the minimum wage to \$15/hr and respect frontline workers. AFSCME Council 3 represents almost 800 frontline staff who have worked hard with little respect throughout the pandemic including hundreds at UMB. University staff that AFSCME represents have wages starting below \$15 per hour.

Check out the video from this event: [www.facebook.com/AFSCMEMD/](http://www.facebook.com/AFSCMEMD/)

Despite working hard throughout the pandemic, the University System continues to offer shameful poverty wages while simultaneously refusing to bargain directly with the biggest union in the System. Unlike state employees, all frontline staff at the University of Maryland Baltimore were left out of hazard pay. AFSCME members are urging the University to respect workers.

AFSCME Local 1839 President Angela Webb said, "Our union is ready to fight. A change is coming, and our staff deserves some respect in their paycheck. No more poverty wages at UMB! You can't support a family on \$15/hour!"

AFSCME Council 3 President Patrick Moran said, "The University System of Maryland (USM) needs to negotiate now. It's shameful that wages continue to be so low despite other campuses in the same city raising their wages. This chaos is unacceptable, and we are urging the USM to negotiate one contract covering all campuses with our union now."

Del. Brooke Lierman of 46th district joining AFSCME said, "No matter what system school they work at, our University System employees must be kept safe and healthy to the greatest extent possible. We continue to be in the midst of a pandemic and every USM school should have the same protocols in place that are transparent and fair and reward employees who are fully vaccinated and are compliant with masking policies. In addition, no USM school should be paying less than \$15/hour. This past year the General Assembly passed SB9 to ensure that the USM schools would implement uniform policies across the USM. It is my great hope that USM will re-engage in discussions with AFSCME leaders who represent the thousands of working men and women at our phenomenal USM schools."

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## Statewide Emergency Pay Grievance Update August 31st, 2021

When the pandemic began 18 months ago, frontline workers stepped up. The Hogan administration appropriately followed our MOU and paid workers emergency pay for the first two weeks of the crisis. Since those two weeks, AFSCME Council 3 has been engaged in collecting grievant submissions and pursuing the largest case against the State of Maryland ever filed.

This process began with employees from each agency filing a grievance to their agency. Almost a year later, because of timelines being tolled because of the COVID-19 crisis, these grievances have finally made it through all three previous steps of the grievance procedure. These cases have now been consolidated at the Office of Administrative Hearings into one big court case.

Causing further delays, as our legal team anticipated, the state filed motions to dismiss to try to prevent the case from being heard. Our lawyers and our membership responded, and there was a hearing on these motions to dismiss Monday, August 16th. We believe it went well, and the cases will not be dismissed, but the ruling from the judge is not due until September 15th, 2021. The judge did convene a pre-hearing hearing to deal with any other preliminary issues on Sept 25, provided he rules against dismissing the case, and then the case should be heard in October.

We will have updates as soon as we get them. If you need information in the meantime, don't hesitate to reach out to the lead grievant from your agency, listed below, or contact our Member Resource Center at 410.547.1515.

Our members power our union. This grievance is just one way to support our fight for living wages and respect in our paychecks. Become a member today to stand with your union by filling out an online membership form.

Stay tuned for more updates on ways to get involved in the fight for wages this fall.



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## AFSCME Council 3 Connecting Veterans to Resources

With the recent news of troops leaving Afghanistan, AFSCME Council 3 is supporting veterans and sharing information about important resources available. Many may find the news triggering or upsetting but it's critical to remember that what is happening now does not minimize the sacrifices of those who served. There is not one way to think or feel or act. The important thing is to be aware of the many mental health resources available to you.

As state employees, members have access to the Employee Assistance Program through the Department of budget and management. You are not alone. AFSCME Council 3 stands with all veterans and wants to help everyone get through this troubling time.

There is no shame in seeking assistance for mental health and there are many resources available to you. Fighting the stigma for mental health begins with each of us and the most important thing we can do for each other is check-in and listen without judgment.

Find more resources: <https://www.afscmemd.org/>

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## Pay Equity for DOL Inspectors: When We Fight, We Win

The inspector units in the state of Maryland do key work to keep the community safe. Amusement ride Inspectors make sure our kids are safe in amusement parks. The elevator inspectors provide a vital service that keeps everyone safe every time they step inside an elevator in Maryland. When you see those inspection tickets inside the elevator- these are the people keeping us safe. The boiler inspectors also make sure boilers throughout the state are functioning properly, such that we don't have to worry every time we enter a building with a boiler.

Together, these inspectors fought for pay equity and for their hard work keeping Marylanders safe to be recognized. The amusement ride inspectors initiated this fight by writing a letter to management signed by the majority of staff. Through this process, wide disparities between the pay of the three types of inspectors were discovered. Members of AFSCME from all three classifications came together to demand a meeting with management. After three days of constant outreach, members had a meeting scheduled with management. By working together, members made a strong case and began working on escalating their concerns to the legislators who make budgetary decisions for the Department of labor.

Within weeks of that letter and meeting and unified action across departments, inspectors were notified they would be given an increase to create pay parity. When we fight, we win!

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## Fighting Poverty Wages and Unsafe Working Conditions in Higher Education!

State employees of Maryland have consistently pushed forward to contain the virus at work and stand up for healthy and safe workplaces and non-poverty wages. State employees have been successful in many of the efforts to gain fairness and compensation on the job, and as of July 1st, the state will start every employee at a minimum of \$15 an hour. This is a result of our union, AFSCME, fighting at the bargaining table for several years to put state employees on a path out of poverty.

But Higher Education members have continued to work under unsafe and poverty conditions, too, which has been a tougher battle. At the pandemic's beginning, many Higher Ed members were working under horrendous conditions, cleaning up student dorms and buildings where sick students were housed. No personal protective gear was provided, and no standards or protocols were implemented to ensure safe and healthy conditions. On top of that, many of the higher education members have been working for wages that have made them eligible for public assistance, such as Food Stamps and Medicaid. These were many reasons we worked to pass the higher education consolidated bargaining bill that we passed during the 2021 legislative session. A Bill that we successfully passed but that Governor Hogan vetoed.

Higher Ed members are still fighting for essential health and safety protocols and a living wage. They are exposed to deplorable conditions and a lack of safe working conditions, many of which have not been addressed. Higher Education Locals are supporting each other in a combined effort to take on the conditions and the poverty wages at the campuses across the state. On August 5th, members from across the state gathered in person and virtually to expose management's poverty wages and unsafe working conditions. This is in addition to the rallies and actions that have taken place at Frostburg State, University of Maryland Eastern Shore, College Park, and the University of Maryland Baltimore. Standing together, we are moving the USM to bargain as one, to have one policy for health and safety, and move working people out of poverty.

Working together works! We have seen the power of collective action work. At Morgan State University, after members publicly stood together to demand a \$15 an hour starting wage and converting contractual employees to full time, Morgan State has recently changed their policy and will now enact a \$15 an hour starting wage and is converting the contractual employees in our bargaining units! This is in addition to the \$15 an hour that the University of Baltimore has recently committed to pay new hires after pushing it at the bargaining table! This will bring families out of poverty and provide health care and retirement security for previously uncovered workers!

We will continue to stand together, push to override the Governor's veto of the Higher Education Consolidated Bargaining bill. This will move everyone forward to fight for living wages, healthier working conditions, and safer learning environments. PUSHING FORWARD is the positive direction for our workplaces and our families.

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*I always make sure to introduce myself to new staff when they start. Our job isn't easy but the union always has your back.*

*As a shop steward, my job is to help my co-workers and make sure management follows our contract. We deserve respect!*



**KIM NEAL**

AFSCME Local 557

## Union Power Testimonial



**Because of Maryland's messed up pay system, I found out the man who trained me was earning less than me. This just wasn't right. We won this increase because all of our inspectors stood together and acted together!**

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**TYLER SCARINZI**  
AFSCME Local 3641  
Department of Labor