

OCTOBER 6TH, 2021

# AFSCME 3 NEWSLETTER

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## **Hogan Cuts Pay of Low Wage Springfield Dietary Workers On Same Day \$2.5 Billion Dollar Surplus Announced**

Throughout this crisis, AFSCME Council 3 members have never hesitated to report to work despite the many unclear and unknown risks of exposure. Our union has been fighting for any workers required to report to their physical workplace to receive hazard pay. We have written letters, marched, submitted letters to the editors, and even filed the largest grievance ever to fight back against this unfair form of compensation.

One of the largest groups fighting back was dietary workers in congregate care facilities who have been deemed eligible for response pay by the Department of Budget and Management but denied the pay differential because management deemed they were believed to have the opportunity to socially distance. Many frontline workers know this is untrue and in fact, dietary workers recently conducted a letter-writing campaign to invite managers to join dietary staff on the frontline to walk a day in their shoes. Management did not respond to the invitation and this week announced the pay cuts.

This week, staff at Springfield Hospital Center announced an audit mysteriously conducted in the last 3 months that found that Springfield was overpaying response pay to the dietary workers. These workers had been properly compensated, unlike other dietary departments prior to this audit. Meaning as a result of the audit by HR, MDH will be seeking overpayment from frontline staff reporting during the worst pandemic in 100 years. Read more here!

Visit our Website to find out what you can do to help: [afscmemd.org](http://afscmemd.org)

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## **AFSMCE Local 3655 Members Secure Wage Increase for MVA Staff**

Thanks to the hard work from you and your union we were able to push MVA to bring all Customer Agents and Driver's Licensing Agents up to 15.49 an hour. Let's keep up the fight!

This increase is just the start of what we can achieve by fighting together. Across agencies, many long-term employees experience wage compression because of management's inadequate pay scale and unwillingness to reward and recognize long-term employees. Wage compression occurs when employees who have been in a job for a long time make less than new hires in the same position. Our union is fighting for fair and equitable increases for all employees.

This fall, we will be working with our allies in the legislature and community to fight for living wages for all public employees. Join us at our rally to stand with Council 3's COVID-19 heroes on Thursday, October 20th, 2021 at 6 pm. RSVP Here!

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## AFSCME Council 3 Continues Fight to Extend Emergency Paid Sick Leave

Last June, Governor Hogan, and his administration allowed the Emergency Paid Sick Leave program to expire, taking away vital protection from frontline workers exposed to COVID-19. Without EPSL, frontline workers must use their own time to quarantine after a workplace exposure instead of the emergency leave. Sometimes this means that they must use Leave Without Pay and stay out of work with no pay. Not only is this a burden to frontline workers and their families, but it also ultimately puts workers in the position to choose between their paycheck and their health and safety.

AFSCME members continue to urge management to reinstate EPSL hours to protect frontline workers and ensure no worker has to choose between quarantining for their safety and a paycheck. Our elected bargaining team will be raising this issue during negotiations with the Governor's administration this fall. In addition, members came together to write letters to legislators overseeing the budget and spending of federal COVID aid, which Governor Hogan could be used to fund this EPSL extension. To date, the Governor has spent just 16% of the billions of federal aid. This funding could be used to extend EPSL, pay fair hazard pay and protect frontline workers in many other ways.

AFSCME Members urged legislators ahead of a September 22 briefing on federal aid spending to question the Department of Budget and Management about EPSL and why this program has not been extended. By organizing and sending letters, we ensured the Governor's team was questioned about their decision. At the briefing on September 22, Del. Kirill Reznik (D-39) raised the issue with DBM Secretary David Brinkley.

The delegate asked, "what we are seeing is a number of our state employees are dealing with the (COVID) variants, whether they be nurses or corrections officers or others living in congregate or working in congregate facilities. At this point, they have all but expended all of their sick and personal leave time, and because the emergency leave program has ended, is there anything that you and the Governor are thinking about doing in order to compensate them, or maybe using some of the federal funds that we are getting in order to help out our state employees who have used up all of their time in their efforts to try and help the people of Maryland?"

In response, Secretary Brinkley acknowledged awareness of the issue but little else: "I think that was one of the topics that were brought up, and we're trying to do some of the research on the magnitude of it, who has what's left." He continued, "so we'll find out where we are along those lines... but it has hit our radar scope, and we're trying to gauge exactly what that is."

If you have not already taken the pledge to stand with Council 3 COVID-19 heroes in the fight for raises and respect: [bit.ly/AFSCME3Pledge](https://bit.ly/AFSCME3Pledge)

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## **AFSCME Higher Education Members Preparing to Negotiate First Consolidated Contract with the USM**

On Thursday, September 30th, higher education members of AFSCME Council 3 came together for a rally to kick off our fight for a raise and to negotiate our first consolidated contract with the University System of Maryland. Over 75 members from different campuses across the USM met on zoom to discuss how to prepare for contract negotiations and hear from elected officials about the plan to override Senate Bill 9.

Before the virtual rally, AFSCME members spoke out at a press conference urging the USM to negotiate now because of the many issues created by negotiating multiple contracts. AFSCME released a report detailing wage disparities within the USM which could be remedied by a consolidated contract. Read the full press release and report on our website: [www.afscmemd.org](http://www.afscmemd.org).

Every campus will be starting a Higher Education Action Team (HEAT) which will work together to prepare for contract negotiations. Now that we've finally won the right to have one contract for all USM universities and now we need to get ready. Members of the HEAT are committing to:

- Work to build my union by signing up new members
- Mobilize my co-workers to support the union.
- Communicate to my coworkers about the union and I will listen to my coworkers and communicate back to my union.
- Make sure our current union contract is respected
- Fight until we win a great consolidated contract

Turn up the HEAT today and commit to your union and the fight for a first contract by visiting [afscmemd.org](http://afscmemd.org) or call our Member Resource Center at 410.547.1515.

On Thursday, we were also joined by legislators who are supporting our override of Senate Bill 9 which grants us the right to negotiate one consolidated contract. When the veto is overridden, the USM will have 30 days before the law goes into effect. We need to be ready to meet them at the table! Thank you to Senator Ben Kramer, Senator Nancy King, Senator Sarah Elfleth, and Delegate Tony Bridges for joining members on Thursday.

Stay tuned for updates on the fight for a raise and one strong and fair contract.

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## RSVP for Upcoming Events

Western Regional AFSCME  
Meeting

Wednesday, October 6th, 6pm

Eastern Shore Regional AFSCME  
Meeting

Thursday, October 7th, 6pm

March for COVID-19 Heroes: Rally  
for Raises and Respect  
6pm, October 20th, Baltimore

**STAND WITH COUNCIL 3**  
**COVID-19 HEROES** 

**6PM WEDNESDAY**  
**OCTOBER 20TH**

AFSCME 3 members have been on the frontline of this pandemic to support and protect all Marylanders. AFSCME 3 members are COVID-19 heroes.

Join AFSCME 3 and partners as we fight to get what our COVID-19 Heroes deserve:

- Living Wages
- Fix and expand collective bargaining

**The denial of adequate wage increases has led to a recruitment and retention crisis for Maryland state and higher education employees.**

**STAGNANT WAGES HARM VITAL STATE SERVICES OUR COMMUNITIES ARE DEPENDING ON TO RECOVER FROM THE PANDEMIC**

**All across MD from hospitals to prisons to social services to state highway administration talented, valuable people are leaving for better paying jobs, often with the counties or with the federal government, and state positions are left unfilled.**

[bit.ly/AFSCME3Pledge](https://bit.ly/AFSCME3Pledge)