

| THE WALTERS | ART MUSEUM |

November 2, 2021

Dear Council Members Cohen, McCray, Dorsey, Conway, Torrence, Burnett, Bullock, Porter, and Ramos:

On Friday, October 22, I received an email from the Walters Workers United (WWU) Organizing Committee with a document claiming to be a letter “signed by members of the Baltimore City Council.” In my nine years as Executive Director of the Walters Art Museum, I have never received communication from Baltimore City Council members—or any other City department or any government agency—through a third party. To date, none of the individuals addressed in the letter have received formal communication from any of your offices. Please note, both the email and document bearing your names are attached.

Nonetheless, since this letter has also been shared with the press and the public, I want to make several points in reply, as follows. First, the letter states that “We understand that you desire a National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) election because it would not include guards and even more importantly as a public corporation, the NLRB would not hold jurisdiction.” This is a completely false statement on several points.

As I said in my remarks at the October 14 informational hearing of the City Council’s Education, Workforce, and Youth Committee—and have stated publicly elsewhere—a vote managed by the NLRB is the standard process. I do not “desire” it. My preferences about this process are irrelevant. The NLRB is the agency with jurisdiction over the Walters Art Museum and its employees concerning union representation.

Although WWU and AFSCME Council 67 appear to be confused about who has jurisdiction, the aforementioned hearing offered answers. Most notably, City Chief Solicitor Hilary Ruley was clear and unequivocal that the City Council cannot extend City collective bargaining rights to Walters employees because the museum is not a City agency. Her remarks follow on the Law Department’s [earlier memorandum](#) with the same conclusion. Contrary to the letter we received, the representative from the Office of the Labor Commissioner likewise affirmed during the hearing that its office is not able to hold an official election for Walters employees.

Ultimately, all of this argument is unnecessary. To get to a vote, WWU and AFSCME Council 67 must file a representation petition with whichever agency has jurisdiction. If you, as members of the City Council, want to support WWU, the single best step you can take is to encourage WWU, or any museum employees, to file the necessary petition that will lead to a vote.

Regarding the request that I meet with WWU, I want to reiterate that I do not plan to do so because, stated simply: there is nothing to discuss or mediate. I clearly understand their assertion that some—even many—workers at the Walters want to form a union, and I stand by my repeated statements that

we respect the museum's employees' right to consider forming such a union. At this point in the process, my only role is to ensure that each eligible employee has an opportunity to vote on whether to form a union. There are no other meaningful issues to discuss with WWU at this stage, nor will a meeting resolve WWU's and AFSCME's confusion about the NLRB's jurisdiction, or alter my consistent position that a petition filed with and an election administered by the NLRB are the appropriate next steps.

City Council involvement in this issue is unnecessary. However, if you want to be helpful, I again suggest you encourage them to move forward with a petition for a vote, so that eligible Walters Art Museum employees can decide for themselves whether to unionize.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'JMA', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Julia Marciari-Alexander, PhD
Andrea B. and John H. Laporte Director

Cc: Nick Mosby, City Council President