



CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
CITY COUNCIL

June 22, 2020

Timothy Rub George D. Widener Director and Chief Executive Officer
Philadelphia Museum of Art

Leslie Anne Miller, Chair
Philadelphia Museum of Art Board of Trustees

Dear Mr. Rub and Chairperson Miller:

I write to urge you to promptly recognize the Philadelphia Museum of Art Union, in affiliation with District Council 47 of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME DC 47). As a cultural anchor and icon that receives public funding, the Museum has a responsibility to protect the health, safety, and economic security of its staff, and I ask you to allow your employees to pursue unionization efforts without interference and to support cooperative discussions with the Philadelphia Museum of Art Union.

The Philadelphia Museum of Art has long been a point of pride for our city, not only as a national and global attraction for the arts but also in providing cutting-edge education and instruction. The Museum attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors each year, further cementing the City of Philadelphia as an arts and culture destination. However, as you know, the Philadelphia Museum of Art is only as strong as its employees. The ability of the Philadelphia Museum of Art to bring new perspectives and build community through the arts depends on the diligent work of employees that make such programming and operations a reality.

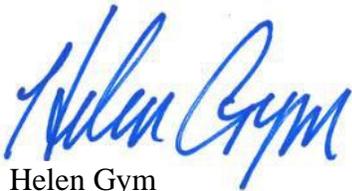
The development of this unionization effort comes as at a time when our City faces immense economic uncertainty, when the health and safety of workers will continue to be threatened due to COVID-19, and when inequities in the museum sector glaringly reflect our nation's reckoning with racial and socioeconomic disparities. It also comes in the wake of very serious revelations of harassment and abuse by museum officials, and the failure by management to create a supportive workplace free from discrimination.

In these challenging times, it will be paramount for the Museum to work cooperatively with its employees to achieve financial stability that does not rely on debilitating cuts to staff, especially those who are already the most vulnerable. Recognition of the Union will better ensure that health and safety protocols that can adequately protect both Philadelphia Museum of Art employees as well the public will be implemented upon reopening. A Union will also provide necessary protections to employees as the Museum works to address the aforementioned serious management and leadership issues and regain the trust of its workforce.

We are living in a historical moment where we must come together to address institutional inequities. As a recipient of taxpayer money and a cultural bedrock in the City of Philadelphia, the Museum must use its energy and resources to support its employees and to bolster its renowned collection and programming, not to attempt to squash efforts to create a healthier and safer workplace. The Philadelphia Museum of Art must be a safe, equitable, and accessible home for the arts in Philadelphia. Your recognition of the Philadelphia Museum of Art Union helps enormously in our efforts to achieve that goal.

I therefore call on you to recognize the Philadelphia Museum of Art Union, and to allow your employees to move forward expeditiously and collaboratively into bargaining.

Sincerely,



Helen Gym
City Councilmember (At Large)



Kendra Brooks
City Councilmember (At Large)



Katherine Gilmore Richardson
City Councilmember (At Large)



Isaiah Thomas
City Councilmember (At Large)



Kenyatta Johnson
City Councilmember (2nd District)



Jamie Gauthier
City Councilmember (3rd District)



Bobby Henon
City Councilmember (6th District)