



SEATTLE CITY COUNCIL | DISTRICT 3

COUNCILMEMBER KSHAMA SAWANT

Monday August 5, 2019

Joseph Rosa, Director/CEO
Frye Art Museum
704 Terry Avenue
Seattle, Washington 98104

Mr. Rosa:

As a rank and file member of the local teachers union, as District 3 City Councilmember, and an elected representative of Seattle's working people, I urge you to negotiate without delay a just union contract with the museum security guards unionized as the Art Workers Union.

I have been appalled to learn from the members of the Art Workers Union about the obfuscation and hostility you have displayed to date. You challenged the voting eligibility of nearly half of the workers in their union election last month. You have now hired a huge international law firm, Dorsey and Whitney, to represent you at the bargaining table. And your lawyer proceeded to bully and threaten the workers at that first bargaining session, according to reports I've received from union members.

Your hostility to the workers is completely counterproductive, and I can assure you that my Council Office will spare no effort to see that the Frye workers receive full justice.

There is no excuse for Frye management to deny wage and benefit improvements for the workers. The Frye security guards are among those who have helped make Seattle a vibrant, dynamic community. They've shared their creativity and artistry as glassblowers, printmakers, painters, and pen-and-ink artists. They are called security guards by Frye, but in fact they do more than guard the artwork. They guide museum visitors, and lend their own artistic expertise in teaching people about the Frye's exhibits.

And yet these workers face economic eviction from Seattle, because of the vice-grip of your stinginess and unaffordable rents from greedy, corporate landlords.

Your museum board of directors has chosen to nickel-and-dime the workers on wages, while paying you, the CEO, more than \$229,000/year and paying themselves – relatively well-to-do

directors – the equivalent of \$115/hour for their board “service,” [according to the museum’s own 2017 IRS-990 filings](#).

Meanwhile, greedy corporate landlords are jacking up rents all over our city. These workers are on the edge of being homeless.

This is unacceptable. You have the resources to pay and treat all of your workers fairly. The Frye Art Museum, as HistoryLink has reported, possesses “[an endowment that makes it the envy of its peers](#).” Management proudly proclaims in its annual reports that the [Frye receives contributions from Vulcan, US Bank, BNY Mellon Wealth Management, Windermere Real Estate, and other major corporations](#). It’s time for the Frye and its wealthy corporate benefactors to pay up and provide the workers a living wage, excellent benefits, good working conditions, and sufficient work hours.

I salute the Frye workers for their bravery in standing up. My Council Office will do whatever it takes to ensure they succeed in getting a union contract. And it’s why my Office is also uniting working people across District 3 and citywide to build the movement for rent control, free of corporate loopholes, and taxing big business so we can fund a massive social housing program.

The Frye Art Museum prides itself on being a “living legacy of visionary patronage and civic responsibility.” It’s time for you and your board to demonstrate that mission in your relationship with your workers.

Sincerely,



Councilmember Kshama Sawant