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ACLU of Maryland Unionizes with OPEIU Local 2

Fourteen employees at the ACLU of Maryland joined the Office and Professional Employees International Union (OPEIU) Local 2 on Wednesday, July 31st, 2019. The unit, comprised of organizers, attorneys, legal fellows and assistants, and policy specialists, spent nine long months building up power and support for the union before they finally won an election with the American Arbitration Association the last day of July. The recognition agreement with management and the American Arbitration Association allowed the unit to technically be voluntarily recognized, albeit through an election.

The ACLU of Maryland is an affiliate of the national American Civil Liberties Union, a progressive nonprofit that works to preserve and maintain individual freedoms. Staff routinely expressed how important it is for an organization with such dedication to civil liberties to support an employee union--after all, as the ACLU has on their own website, "Collective bargaining statutes provide critical and necessary protection for workers who exercise basic civil rights, in particular, the rights of speech, association, and petition. Efforts to strip workers of these protections have no place in our democracy."

Following the victory, the Organizing Committee took the time to reflect on the process and recognize the progress they made:

"We are incredibly grateful for the opportunity to negotiate a workplace that is fair and equitable for all staff. The staff at the ACLU of Maryland take exercising our rights as employees as seriously as the work we produce on behalf of our clients, Maryland residents, and broader ACLU of Maryland family. We hope that the ACLU of Maryland will hold itself to the same values we use to fight for our civil liberties every day and apply those values to our internal workplace reform. While it is unfortunate that the unionization process was met with increased distrust on the management side and has taken nearly half a year after asking for voluntary recognition, we expect the contract negotiation to be more efficient and collaborative as we all share the same goals."

OPEIU Local 2 is looking forward to welcoming the staff at the ACLU of Maryland into its membership, and is hopeful for the first round of contract bargaining. This is the latest non-profit to join Local 2, following the Solidarity Center, Planned Parenthood, the National Democratic Institute, and PartnersGlobal.

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For more information about the campaign or organizing with OPEIU, please contact Local 2 Organizer Grace Reckers at greckers@opeiu-local2.org.