

Justice for María and Custodial Workers

On August 8, 2018, María was discharged from her position at Service Management Group (SMG) cleaning Freeman Athletic Center for Wesleyan University. Before she was abruptly and unjustly discharged, María had been working at Wesleyan for nine years as a custodial worker and with SMG for sixteen years. María is a fifty-five year old woman with documented high blood pressure issues and diabetes. She is the primary guardian, caretaker, and source of income for her four grandchildren. Several of María's past coworkers have reported her to be dedicated to her job.

At the time of her dismissal, SMG alleged that María was sleeping on the job. When she was confronted around 6:45 AM, María had been sitting and drinking coffee in order to get her blood sugar up. María was instantly terminated without severance. Normally, a worker in this situation is given a warning and suspended for three days, but María was not suspended, and never had been in the past. Upon being fired, María immediately went to her union, SEIU Local 32BJ, for support. María has filed a grievance through the union but it is currently in the process of arbitration, which can take years. At this time, María has been out of work for two months.

María is a person who urgently needs our support, but her story exemplifies myriad worker abuses from SMG and Wesleyan. SMG has shown a pattern of firing older workers and replacing them with younger ones. Additionally, the corporation has assigned already overworked janitors with more spaces to clean without asking them if they are capable. As Wesleyan has expanded, they have refused to hire more workers to share the increased workload. As this expansion continues, new workers must be hired to meet custodial needs.

Demands:

In signing this petition, I join Wesleyan students, faculty, and staff members in demanding:

First, that María be offered a comparable job from SMG;

Second, that the arbitration process with SEIU Local 32BJ be sped up in order to allow María to return to work in a timely manner;

And third, that SMG hire five more workers at Wesleyan by the end of 2018-2019 academic year and redistribute duties accordingly.

Signed: _____ Print name: _____

Date: _____

*For more information, reach out to Sophia Ryterband (sryterband@wesleyan.edu), Alex De La Rosa (aidelarosa@wesleyan.edu), Jacob Beilenson (jbeilenson@wesleyan.edu), or Emma Llano (ellano@wesleyan.edu).
USLAC, Wesleyan's labor solidarity student group, meets Wednesdays at 8 PM in the UOC (190 High St).*