



BAD SERVICE:

**The Union Behind Dining
Workers United is a Mess**

JULY 2026

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Executive Summary

Pennsylvania Dining Workers United is a project of the Workers United Pennsylvania Joint Board (PAJB). PAJB represents approximately 1,500 campus food service workers at 20 Pennsylvania schools. The Dining Workers United campaign appears to be an attempt by the union to boost its flagging membership numbers. PAJB overall has a membership of about 5,000, which is down from a high point of 10,000 in 2000.

PAJB has an annual budget of \$4 million, but spends just 34 percent of it on “representational activities.” Large portions of PAJB’s budget are spent on salaries and investment purchases. Analysis of PAJB’s annual spending over the past five years categorizes some \$995,902 into red-flag categories such as lawyers and public relations.

Several PAJB organizers have exhibited concerning behavior. PAJB’s current Organizing Director was arrested for assaulting police officers in a highly publicized case in 2014. Other organizers at PAJB appear to identify as socialists and have called for the destruction of America, among other things.

With so little of the group’s budget spent on representation, and with such a motley crew of organizers, it shouldn’t come as a surprise that many members are unhappy with their union representation. Union members at newly organized Muhlenberg College report that their working conditions are unchanged, or in some ways worse, following their union contract. Multiple other businesses unionized with Workers United in PA have decertified and criticized the union.

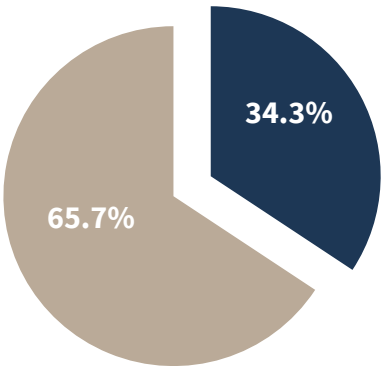
Many PA Dining Workers United members were laid off or furloughed during the pandemic. Despite this, PAJB’s manager signed an op-ed rejecting reopening legislation. The President of Workers United also opposed reopening.

With a record like this, it’s no wonder PAJB appears to be collapsing.

PAJB’s Financial Situation

PAJB has an annual budget of \$3,969,449. Of this budget, just 34% is spent on things that the union identifies as “representational activities.”

- Representational Activities: 34.3%**
- Purchase of Investments and Fixed Assets: 8.7%**
- Per Capita Tax: 18.9%**
- Overhead and Other: 38.1%**



● Representational Activities
● Other

The union spends approximately \$1.5 million on base salaries for its officers and staff. Several officers at PAJB make six-figure salaries.

Outside of its overheard spending, PAJB often spends money on things that could raise concerns for members, such as lawyers, hotels, and public relations.

2025 SALARIES FOR KEY PAJB OFFICERS

\$164,435.....	paid to Manager David Melman
\$134,813.....	paid to Associate Manager Jocelyn Lunney
\$104,089.....	paid to Organizing Director Robert Murray

CATEGORIZED SPENDING BY PAJB 2020-2025

Advocacy:.....	\$20,000
Hotels and Events:.....	\$315,228
Lawyers:.....	\$213,862
Merchandise:	\$190,001
Public Relations:.....	\$207,624
Travel:	\$49,187
Total:	\$995,902

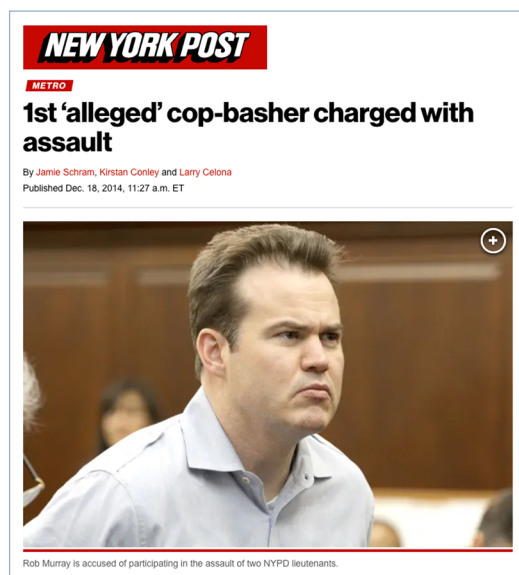
Key Organizers at PAJB

Multiple members of the PAJB organizing staff have a history of concerning behavior and statements.

Organizing Director Robert Murray

PAJB's Form LM2 lists "Robert Murray" as its organizing director. In 2014, an SEIU staffer named Robert Murray allegedly assaulted police officers in New York City.¹

According to the New York Post:



"His acts of violence are right up there with being among the most aggressive acts," NYPD Deputy Chief William Aubry said at a press conference Thursday evening.

A video taken on the bridge shows Murray in the middle of the ambush on Lt. Patrick Sullivan and Lt. Philip Chan as they struggle to arrest Linsker.

First he attempts to take one cop down, pulling him to the ground as the protesters scramble to separate Linsker from the officers.

Murray then pulls his hood off and hovers near the edges of the skirmish before walking away from the mob scene — apparently thinking Linsker had shaken off the cops.

But looking back, he notices they nabbed him again, and pulls his hoodie back over his head before diving back into the fray.

He throws a punch at Chan, who stumbles backward and then tries to grab him, Aubry said. Murray then beats him back with another blow to the head.

"There's a witness who said he hit him so hard that he heard the fist hitting his face," Aubry said. Chan's nose was broken during the skirmish, police sources added.

Murray is a regular at political protests — and was arrested during the 2004 Republican National Convention in the Big Apple."

Form LM2s filed with the Department of Labor show Murray leaving the SEIU's payroll in 2022 and an Organizing Director named Robert Murray appearing on PAJB's staff shortly after in 2025. Workers United is an affiliate of the SEIU.

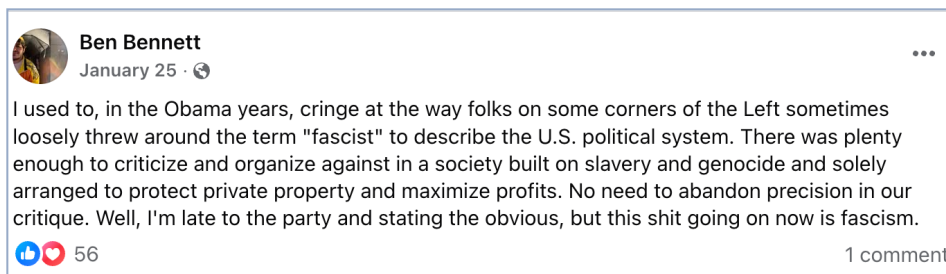
In 2025, PAJB posted pictures of its members and staff, which included a man who was identified as the same Robert Murray from the assault by facial recognition software.²

Organizing Director Ben Bennett

PAJB's other Organizing Director, Ben Bennett, is a self-identified socialist.³



Bennett has also described the “U.S. political system” as “a society built on slavery and genocide” and “fascism.”⁴



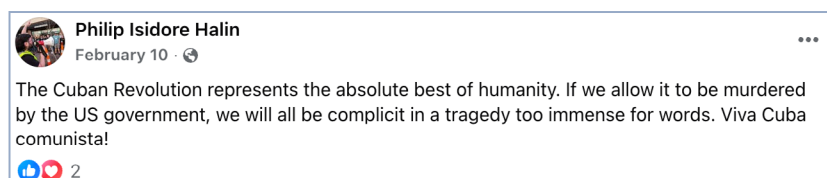
Bennett has been directly involved in the PA Dining Workers United campaign.⁵

Organizer Philip Isidore Halin

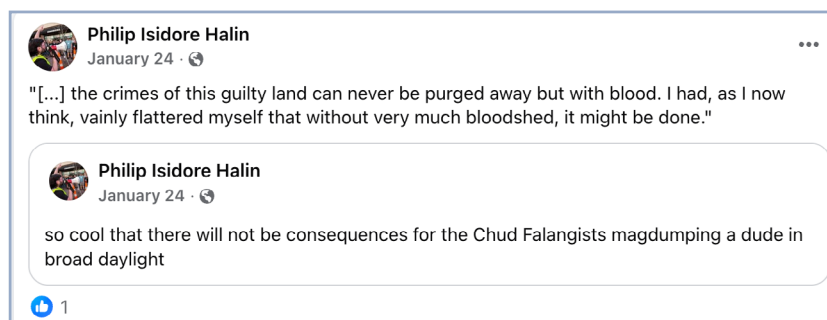
Philip Halin is an organizer with PAJB. Halin has stated that “America delenda est,” which is a Latin phrase that translates to “America must be destroyed.”⁶



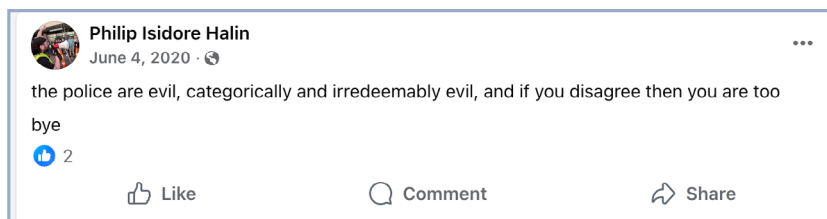
Halin is also a supporter of the communist dictatorship in Cuba.⁷



Halin has also posted messages seemingly suggesting that people need to be “purged away but with blood.”⁸



Halin also believes that anyone who doesn’t think police are “irredeemably evil” is also irredeemably evil.⁹



Halin has been confirmed as directly involved in the PA Dining Workers United campaign.¹⁰

Organizer Duncan Riley

Duncan Riley is another organizer on PAJB's staff. Riley appears to believe in "abolish[ing] borders" and supported the 2020 riots in Minneapolis, which he described as "a city rising up."¹¹

Riley has also posed for photographs with a communist flag.¹²



Duncan Riley
 May 30, 2020 · 🌐

What Walz and co. have been saying about "outside agitators" is simply not validated by the evidence. Besides the accounts from organizers and activists, as the last image shows, local news research into jail records has found the vast majority of people arrested are from Minnesota. Thousands of people have been on the streets, and everything really points to the vast majority of them being Minnesotan.

Some of the stuff Walz has said is downright racist, like claiming that the cartels are coming to check on their "fronts" in a historically latinx area of Minneapolis. It equally serves as a way for those in power to dodge responsibility, allowing them to avoid stating the uncomfortable reality that they have authorized massive repressive actions against the people they are supposedly serving.

And that really is the uncomfortable reality for Minnesota's ever so liberal establishment. Black and brown people, the youth, workers, thousands of people have stood up and said no to racist police violence, they have given Walz, Frey, and so many others a historic rebuke, a rebuke those men are currently trying to crush with rubber bullets.

The story here is not about outside agitators, it is about a city rising up and saying that racism, state terror, and inequality should all be thrown into the dustbin of history.

A few concluding thoughts:

For the amateur historian of the 19th century it truly is bemusing to see the governor of Minnesota in the 21st century take a page out of Casimir-Périer's book and randomly blame anarchists for all social ills. Fortunately, I too am capable of adapting late 19th century French history to the present day, and so I say that the name Walz will figure somewhere next to the names Thiers and Gallifet in the history books.

Outside agitators? Really? Does people's commitment to justice or a better world really vary depending on which side of a line on a map they were born on? Abolish borders and nostra patria è il mondo intero, (our homeland is the whole world).



Member Dissatisfaction

Many members at PAJB, including both the group's campus dining worker members and other members, have expressed dissatisfaction with their union representation.

Dining Workers at Muhlenberg College joined Workers United in 2024. Despite joining the union, workers report that conditions at their job have not actually improved, and in some cases have gotten worse.

According to Muhlenberg Weekly:¹³

"We thought things would get better."

– Anonymous Sodexo Employee

"When the union contract went into effect, Sodexo required staff to 'rebid' or reapply for their jobs—a standard process in unionized accounts, but one that still came as a shock. Some workers lost their previous positions. Others were moved into roles they hadn't expected or didn't want."

– Muhlenberg Weekly

"Break coverage used to be easy. I used to have two or three extra people, but now there's no wiggle room. Everything is rigid and tight,"

– Evan Hallman, Sodexo Employee

"I want to tell people, 'Your raise more than covers the dues.' But that doesn't take into account the hour cuts."

– Evan Hallman, Sodexo Employee

Outside of the university dining industry, other members of Workers United in Pennsylvania have reported dissatisfaction with their union membership.

According to the Center Square:¹⁴

"I can't speak on behalf of all of the unionized stores, but I do know for our store, the initial inclusivity that was kind of projected has turned into being the complete opposite. We thought we would have a voice, but we really don't because no one's in communication with us."

– Elizabeth Gulliford, employee at a unionized Starbucks in Pittsburgh

According to WHY?¹⁵

“Workers United union officials have been bad for the stability of Good Karma and have not stood up for the interests of me and my coworkers.”

– Marco Camponeschi, employee at PAJB-unionized Good Karma Cafe

According to the National Right to Work Foundation:¹⁶

“Workers United union officials have had over a year in power in our workplace, and in that time have made it increasingly clear that our interests are not aligned. That’s why we’re joining other Ultimo employees in exercising our right to remove this union.”

– Jacob Johnston, employee at unionized Ultimo Coffee

Opposition to Covid-19 Reopenings

The Covid-19 pandemic resulted in millions of layoffs across the hospitality industry. This included hundreds of employees represented by PA Dining Workers United. Despite this, PAJB Manager David Melman and Workers United President Lynn Fox opposed efforts to re-open shuttered businesses.

David Melman, in the Pennsylvania Capital-Star:¹⁷

Instead of cooperating with public health officials, and centering the needs of our healthcare providers and frontline workers first, some politicians are looking to score political points with a series of ‘reopening’ bills... This is not a responsible way to govern.”

Lynn Fox, in USA Today:¹⁸

“[O]ur workplaces are nowhere near ready for a mass reentry of workers.”

Meanwhile, hundreds of PAJB members were laid off.

According to the SJU Hawk:¹⁹

“Currently, 175 of 186 total hourly associates, managers and supervisors contracted from Aramark are placed on furlough through mid-May, according to Kristina Coble, general manager of SJU Dining.”

“Benner said the university is not providing wages for Aramark employees furloughed during this time.”

According to Philadelphia Business Journal:²⁰

“Layoffs on college campuses by Philadelphia-based food service company Aramark are now hitting home as 152 employees have been laid off at La Salle University amid the Covid-19 pandemic.”

“Meanwhile, 112 Aramark employees were laid off on the same day at East Stroudsburg University, per a WARN filing in Pennsylvania.”

Health Standards in PAJB Campus Dining Facilities

Multiple campus dining halls represented by PAJB have been subject to complaints of food poisoning or health violations.

According to the West Chester University Quad:²¹

“The amount of stories about students getting food poisoning from Sykes and the Commons is astounding... I have gotten food poisoning so many times on campus. I straight up don’t go to the Commons anymore unless I have to be there because of how bad it has treated me. I was talking about how I also got food poisoning from Sykes to a faculty member and she asked if it was from B + F immediately. She was right, of course, but that is bad when faculty members know how notorious some places on campus are for food poisoning. Students pay a lot of money for a meal plan and it is expected that they can eat safely.”

According to Yahoo News:²²

“Point Park’s dining hall received a dozen violations from the Allegheny County Health Department. The report highlights mold and other issues inside Lawrence Hall. Students told Channel 11 they were not surprised.

‘I really avoid the dining hall,’ one student said. Of the 12 violations, two were considered ‘severe.’

One dealt with cleaning and sanitization. The report cited a potato dish and utensils soiled with old food debris. The other covered cross-contamination issues. A pizza cutter and other tools were stored in stagnant, dirty water.

‘I happened to be in the dining hall the day they found the bug in the potatoes and, earlier, I had those potatoes, so I was very grossed out,’ freshman Julia Werner said.

‘It’s really unfortunate that we’re paying so much money for a dining plan with such a lack of priority on our health,’ freshman Ava Breese said.”

According to the SJU Hawk:²³

“A food inspection of Campion Dining Hall by the Philadelphia Department of Public Health on March 27 reported seven violations that require corrective action and further inspections.

Violations include the food slicer not washed, rinsed and sanitized at least every four hours with an accumulation of food residue on it, mold on the base of the soda and milk nozzles and food stored above the 41 degree temperature requirement...

The report also noted “mice droppings” were observed under the shelves of the linens and equipments rooms. A Department of Public Health inspection conducted just over two years on April 21, 2017 also reported visible physical evidence of rodent activity and “fresh mice feces” in multiple areas of the dining hall and food being held at 45-50 degrees.

Endnotes

- 1 <https://nypost.com/2014/12/18/man-linked-to-cop-bashers-turns-himself-in/>
- 2 <https://www.facebook.com/PaJointBoardWorkersUnitedSeiu/posts/pfbid0UgqdQYqDMtfFySjStMTtNznWBgPpb8mvF7EdZUx2rcd-SpBq3KxBN5dNUHcrBsytil>
- 3 <https://x.com/benbennett8585>
- 4 <https://www.facebook.com/ben.bennett.9279/posts/pfbid02x2Vq95SenTfB3YbRYNDZ19BfcyKTYBBT6fLe6252RurMiB-gr87vgPaZD1RvwZjtl?rldid=r3jjnfKM5syK9tyf#>
- 5 <https://thekeystonenews.com/2022/04/04/ku-dining-workers-continue-effort-to-unionize/>
- 6 <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/17g3FL1fUg/>
- 7 <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1CZtJG4H1k/>
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- 10 <https://muhlenbergweekly.com/news/muhlenberg-college-dining-worker-union-rally/>
- 11 <https://www.facebook.com/duncan.riley.5/posts/pfbid02q8x2ZMpt8LZqwFrtBMsf55Djjqzw3qZE3tccBKEWtMK9bMsCYx-UVEa7uSD1zTccGl?rldid=VAEXXhqCusdsOJvV#>
- 12 <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=1161155853947817&set=pb.100001602406347.-2207520000&type=3>
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- 16 <https://www.nrtw.org/news/ultimo-philly-decert-2-01182024/>
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- 20 <https://www.bizjournals.com/philadelphia/news/2020/10/01/aramark-layoffs-la-salle-university.html>
- 21 <https://wcuquad.com/6025322/op-ed/wcupa-has-failed-students-the-meal-problem/>
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- 23 <https://sjuhawknews.com/13050/news/campion-dining-hall-not-in-satisfactory-compliance/>