

# MPL Employee Engagement Team's Statement of Support for RECT Recommendations

The Madison Public Library Employee Culture and Engagement Team was created in 2014 in response to the City of Madison's Engagement and Equity Initiative. Since then, we have worked to foster an engaged, connected, and empowered staff by promoting a positive employee experience through initiatives and events that celebrate and support employee accomplishments and contributions, encourage employee development, and strengthen internal communication. We believe that our mission and goals align with those of Madison Public Library's Racial Equity Change Team (RECT), and we formally state our support of their recommendations to Library Management and the Library Board, particularly those recommendations that contribute to a more welcoming atmosphere for staff of color, encourage antiracist education for library staff, and support library staff's commitment to serving communities of color in Madison.

When library locations shut down due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Racial Equity Change Team began holding online discussions of webinars and videos related to racial equity for staff development. In the wake of the recent Black Lives Matter protests, these discussions became even more relevant and urgent. We partnered with RECT to host a set of these racial equity discussions open to all MPL staff with the goal of supporting staff and giving them an opportunity to voice concerns and suggest solutions to issues relevant to the library. Many of the ideas in the RECT Recommendations come directly from those discussions. Many staff members participating in those discussions work directly with the public. They see and hear what people are experiencing and asking for, and know in which areas they want support and training. The recommendations reflect the concerns of a diverse group of MPL employees across all nine MPL locations.

We fully support all of the recommendations that RECT has put forth and encourage the Library Board and Library Management to implement as many as possible, particularly the following:

## *1.) Police and Madison Public Library*

We echo the need to reevaluate the calling of police on library patrons. MPL frontline staff regularly interact with patrons experiencing mental illness, addiction, domestic abuse, homelessness, trauma, and poverty. In each of these instances, should an incident escalate, the only recourse for intervention available to staff at this time is to call the police. We know there are ways to de-escalate rather than call police, which may lead to trauma for both staff and patrons. We also know that calls to the police disproportionately affect Black youth in our libraries. Library workgroups are currently exploring the Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Streets (CAHOOTS) model of intervention developed in Oregon as a more appropriate alternative to calling the police on our patrons. We support a crisis-specific model of staff and patron assistance.

## 2.) *Policy, Communication, & Accountability*

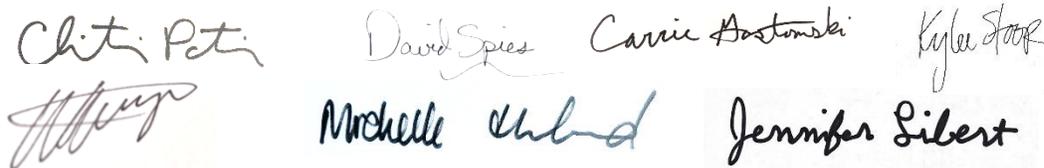
RECT's recommendations list several ways to support current staff of color and work towards building a more diverse, representative library staff. We would like to highlight these recommendations and encourage their implementation:

- Consider what it might look like to reorganize MPL. Conduct an organizational analysis to examine how we are organized to support staff and the community
- Operationalize systems of support for staff of color
- Develop a budget for MPL's Racial Equity Change Team
- Create affinity group(s) for staff of color
- Develop a racial equity statement/commitment that is signed by new staff

## 3.) *Training*

We also strongly support frequent and regular staff training in equity work. We recognize that implicit bias, microaggressions, and other expressions of systemic racism directly influence staff and patron interactions. Staff expertise with anti-racist work varies and all levels of experience need to be supported. Clear and consistent expectations and annual mandatory trainings will ensure support for our individual and organizational work in healing racism.

Madison Public Library is an institution brought to life through its staff and patron communities. In this remarkable moment in history, our communities require us to change and grow, as individuals and as an institution. The Employee Culture and Engagement Team asks Library Management and the Library Board to carefully consider the recommendations of the Racial Equity Change Team; recognizing that these ideas reflect the commitment of frontline staff across the city to do the powerful, transformative work of building a more just and equitable library for everyone.



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