



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Gordon Brillon, Secretary-Treasurer, brownulabor@gmail.com

Brown University Labor Council Calls Upon Brown to Recognize Graduate Fellows

PROVIDENCE, Rhode Island, May 1, 2026—

The Brown University Labor Council represents eight labor organizations with over 7,000 members working at Brown University, Brown University Health, and their affiliates. As a consortium of labor organizations, we believe that all work has dignity and that all workers deserve collective representation. Moreover, we believe that all employers have a responsibility to recognize workers' demands for that representation in the workplace.

We are extremely disappointed that Brown University has decided to reject a request by the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) Local 6516 to incorporate hundreds of graduate fellows into the Graduate Labor Organization (GLO). AFT Local 6516/GLO currently represents graduate teaching and research assistants at Brown University, all of whom also provide services as fellows to the university during the course of their employment. By adding fellows to the bargaining unit, these workers would be ensured union representation during their entire time at Brown. Prior to the request, a strong supermajority of fellows signed union cards, expressing their desire for incorporation into the union.

Traditionally, graduate fellows have not been able to unionize under federal labor law due to precedents set down by the National Labor Relations Board. However, a recent change to Rhode Island labor law explicitly defines fellows as employees, making unionization possible. Brown University should be proud that it has a chance to make history by being the first American university to bargain with fellows. It should also recognize the value of demonstrating its commitment to good-faith collective bargaining to prospective graduate students and community members. Unfortunately, Brown has decided to undermine its reputation, its integrity, and the rights of its workers by rejecting the request.

The Brown University Labor Council stands with graduate fellows and all other workers at Brown University, Brown University Health, and their affiliates who seek the stability and safety provided by union representation. We call upon Brown University to reverse course and voluntarily recognize graduate fellows as part of AFT Local 6516/GLO.

Brown University Labor Council
brownulabor.com