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Forestville, Md. - October 10, 2018: In an arbitration decision damning the leadership at the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), a neutral arbitrator sided with ATU Local 689 to rehire a Track Inspector Supervisor, with backpay, for what the arbitration panel called “[scapegoating] by the Authority for a widespread failing” that led to the 2016 derailment of a Metro Rail car at East Falls Church.

In the October 5, 2018 arbitration decision, Metro was ordered to rehire Christopher Bell, a supervisor fired in August of 2016 for being falsely accused of knowingly accepting falsified inspection reports from other employees. The arbitrators found the issues that caused the East Falls Church derailment were inadequate policies, namely the “one-eighth rule.” The rule states that if a measurement is within one-eighth of an inch of the previous month’s measurement, then inspectors are expected to leave the previous entry as-is. This procedure dates back to the origin of Metro Rail and is not “falsification.”

“This decision makes it clear that nay-sayers like Congresswoman Barbara Comstock and some media outlets were dead wrong to believe Metro’s false accusation without any proof,” said ATU Local 689 Second Vice President Raymond Jackson. “We are vindicated, and the unhelpful and disparaging language that people like Mrs. Comstock used to hurt employee morale was proven false. She should use her position to focus on real improvements to Metro by working with the hard-working employees instead of against them.”

The panel also found that there is no evidence that Mr. Bell cannot be trusted to adequately perform work as a track walker, in spite of Metro’s publicly stated sentiments.

“We are happy for Mr. Bell, as well as the riding public because now the system is safer than before,” said Jackson. “Metro has finally acknowledged their failures to train and has corrected the problem. The retraining proves that the issue was management’s failures and not the workforce itself. We look forward to our members getting back to work, and we hope everyone, including General Manager Paul Wiedefeld, will join us in making Metro safer, more affordable, and more reliable.”

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