

Testimony
HB 641 – Collective Bargaining –
Chancellor of the University System of Maryland – Negotiations
Support

AFSCME supports HB 641. This legislation seeks to modernize the collective bargaining process at the University System of Maryland by following the example of state government when it comes to negotiations. AFSCME Council 3 is the collective bargaining representative for over 6,500 employees at the University System of Maryland (USM) where we represent 15 bargaining units. At the same time, AFSCME represents over 20,000 in state government which include six bargaining units.

In state government, bargaining takes place between all six bargaining units and the Department of Budget and Management. The majority of items are universal in scope and are negotiated that way. However, when there are differences between various state agencies, those are negotiated separately.

Meanwhile, even though there are very few significant differences in concerns and conditions among the University System of Maryland institutions, each campus negotiates with its bargaining units on a campus-by-campus basis. This means that negotiations happen almost continuously with the 15 bargaining units.

What we have learned over the years is that this current process is not only time consuming, it is inefficient. We find that we are negotiating with those who do not have the final authority to make proposals and reach agreements. All-too-often the managers must consult with the University System before making a proposal or responding to an AFSCME proposal. And, ultimately, it is the University System that makes the decision on whether to agree on a ratified proposal. Attached to this testimony are the USM directions of various institutions regarding the limits of their bargaining and their responsibility to consult with the USM during the process.

With HB 641, we will be able to negotiate directly with those who have the authority to offer and reach agreements – the University System. We will be able to save precious time on both the labor and the management sides of the table. And we will not sacrifice the ability to reach individual agreement with campuses when there are unique items to be discussed. This legislation also contains a provision that allows labor and management to work together to bring uniformity among the campuses during the transitional period. This will result in greater equity among system employees and allow both sides of the table to determine the best policies to follow.

HB 641 is a straightforward bill which promises to bring efficiency and equity to the USM. We urge you to provide a favorable report.