



HB 65 - SUPPORT
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Maryland County Public Library Systems'
Employee Collective Bargaining Rights

January 31, 2023

To the honorable Chairman Barnes, Vice Chair Chang and members of the House Appropriations Committee.

My name is Bridget Fitzgerald. I am a union organizer with the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM). I have testified before this committee in previous sessions to help public library workers pass enabling legislation for collective bargaining rights. I'm honored to be able to submit written testimony in favor of House Bill 65 (HB 65).

In 2019, I was asked to meet with a group of library workers from Baltimore County Public Library (BCPL). They had questions about what a union does and how it would apply to their workplace. We met for what was a very long and detailed conversation. That began my association with library workers and the inner-workings of the public library system.

At the time, we were unaware that legislation had to be passed by the Maryland General Assembly in order for these workers to proceed. We did our research and met with Baltimore County leaders to determine the necessary course of action. When we presented the plan to the library staff, they remained committed, so we proceeded.

The BCPL campaign received a lot of attention. There were stories in the paper, social media traffic and conversations between colleagues in different library systems. As a result, I began receiving calls from library workers from other county library systems.

Like BCPL staff, the workers in other counties had a lot of questions. Most notably was the question regarding legislation. They wanted to know if they had to follow the same legislative process or questioned why they had to pass a law if one was passed in the 2021. This topic of conversation caused a lot of stress, as many feared public attention.

I did speak with a worker from Howard County. This county is an exception, as in 2013 a law that applied to these workers was passed. I discussed the specifics of this law and the process. Most objectionable was the law applying only to full-time staff, when half the employees were part-time, and the requirement for the library director to receive a petition with the signatures of all staff supporting interest for a union election. This worker felt staff would be too exposed, thus halting their efforts before they began. I've since been in contact with this worker to provide information regarding HB 65 and possible changes to Howard County's law. This worker advised that he/she and a few other interested colleagues have since left the library system. They didn't want to continue in an environment without a voice, and chose to find employment elsewhere.

I wholeheartedly believe that there are public library workers across the state of Maryland that would like to explore forming a union, but feel overwhelmed by the idea of needing legislation to pass, especially when it

could take more than one session for a bill to pass into law. As a result, library systems are losing valuable employees.

Passing HB 65 will provide a fair and consistent process for employees of any non-unionized library system. If library workers of a particular system wish to organize, the law will lay out the requirements of showing interest and conducting the election. If the employees do not wish to engage in this process, there is no requirement to do so.

Please give library workers access to their rights and an opportunity to have a voice. I respectfully request you vote favorable on HB 65.

Thank you,

Bridget Fitzgerald

Maryland Voter, District 30B