



SB 352 - SUPPORT

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Maryland County Public Library Systems'
Employee Collective Bargaining Rights

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My name is Laura Ewan, and I am Associate General Counsel for the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM). I am honored to be here today speaking to you about SB 352, a crucial piece of legislation that will grant the employees of many of Maryland's County Public Library Systems the right to select a representative of their choosing to bargain on their behalf for their wages, hours, and working conditions.

In Maryland, each county library system exists as a creature of state statute. State law governing library structure and operations allows for boards of trustees or county governments to operate library systems and set wages, hours, and working conditions. However, the state laws do not automatically grant these entities the right to enter into binding collective bargaining agreements **absent a grant of such authority from the legislature**. That's what SB 352 would do—grant that authority to each County's Library employing authority to enter into a collective bargaining agreement, should the Library employees vote to be represented by a union.

For some historical perspective, Prince Georges County Library System, Montgomery County Library System, Baltimore County Public Library System, Howard County Library System, and the Enoch Pratt Library System have all undertaken individual steps to allow for their library employees to be represented for purposes of collective bargaining. But having to do this on a county-by-county basis across Maryland is ineffective, inefficient, and ultimately asking for inconsistencies in how Library employees gain representation.

Following the success of the Baltimore County Public Library Collective Bargaining law in 2021, the IAM was contacted by library workers from county library systems across Maryland, each looking for help in their workplaces. So, it just makes sense—for your busy schedules, and for these employees—to address the issue statewide. SB 352 does just that.

Before drafting SB 352, we examined existing collective bargaining laws across Maryland counties, the collective bargaining laws previously passed for county library systems, as well as long-standing labor standards. The most common components are included in SB 352, because years of experience as a labor law attorney and drafting multiple pieces of legislation has taught me the best practice is to be as consistent and straight-forward as possible. As a result, SB 352 borrows its language from county labor codes and the most recently-enacted collective bargaining law. It also excludes counties where union representation already exists, so as to not change what is currently working in those counties.

Employees who work so hard to provide the numerous services that our libraries offer to the community want a voice in the conversations about the direction of the workplace. They want a seat at the table because they love their jobs. And they want meaningful representation to ensure that it stays that way. That is why we enthusiastically support this bill.

Ultimately, SB 352 strikes a balance between protecting workers' Constitutional right to freedom of association with the library administration's obligation to manage the library system in a way most appropriate to their individual communities. Workers choosing to try to unionize are guaranteed anonymity in demonstrating support for a secret-ballot election to be held in a timely manner. If their election is successful, SB 352 provides next steps for negotiating collective bargaining agreement to be ratified by the employees.

In reading SB 352, you will note management retains their right to exercise control and discretion over the library's operations, direct its employees and all that entails, determine the methods, means, personnel and resources, hire, promote, transfer, and so on. The Board of Trustees maintains its authority regarding the financial oversight and approval of a tentative agreement before it is finalized. And SB 352 imposes deadlines to resolving negotiation issues at impasse in order for collective bargaining agreements to comply with county budgetary processes. So you see, a great deal of research and thought went into drafting SB 352 to ensure that the roles of each party are respected.

Maryland library employees need this bill passed just to have the opportunity to vote to see if they want to have a representative for collective bargaining purposes. Every single library employee we have spoken to sees this as an opportunity to make the job they love even better. These workers provide critical social and cultural services to Maryland residents, and all they ask is for the opportunity to have a collective voice at the table.

We ask you to vote in favor of SB 352 so library employees across Maryland can have the legal right and the freedom to choose whether they wish to be represented by a union or not for the purposes of collective bargaining.

Thank you.