



Senate Bill 352

Education – Public Libraries – Collective Bargaining

MACo Position: **OPPOSE**

To: Finance and Education, Energy, and the
Environment Committees

Date: February 16, 2023

From: Brianna January

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **OPPOSES** SB 352. This bill would establish a uniform statewide collective bargaining process for public library employees.

Counties oppose the one-size-fits-all approach of SB 352, which limits local decision-making. To date, jurisdictions seeking to bargain collectively have pursued single-county legislation, but SB 352 takes those provisions statewide without local input. This would create potentially unsustainable costs for counties, who provide substantial funding for public libraries and the myriad community services they provide throughout Maryland—especially since the legislation does not envision any added State support.

Maryland’s libraries do it all: they support early literacy, create collaborative spaces, connect Marylanders to technology, foster community engagement, prepare Maryland’s kids for K-12 learning, assist residents with workforce development, and serve as central resource hubs for families. Unfortunately, SB 352 could lead to a rollback of these critical functions at a time when access to these free and low-cost services is most needed. Alternatively, this bill might force some library systems to start charging Maryland residents for these services, shifting burdens onto many whose ability to pay is limited.

Current state laws include distinct collective bargaining processes for public library systems in several jurisdictions that have “opted in” to collective bargaining. As partners in the network of public libraries serving the state’s residents, county governments and library governing boards should retain the right to make labor and budgetary decisions that best suit the unique needs and capabilities of the communities they serve.

Counties are proud to support their public libraries. However, the State-imposed system and costs of SB 352 – with no additional State funding – are simply not feasible and could pose substantial budget difficulties for counties. Because this legislation would not provide local flexibility in the decision to allow collective bargaining at county public libraries, nor provide additional State support, MACo **OPPOSES** SB 352 and recommends the Committee issue an **UNFAVORABLE** report.