

Written Testimony Submitted for the House Appropriations Committee
Testimony of Jahann Mentis-Williams, member, AFSCME Maryland
HB 260 – AN ACT concerning State Personnel – Collective Bargaining – Supervisory
Employees
January 26th, 2024

SUPPORT

Dear Chair Barnes, Vice-Chair Chang, and Members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Jahann Mentis-Williams, and I am a Medical Care Program Associate Supervisor with the Maryland Department of Health. Staff are the most critical resource we have when it comes to the functionality and operational capacity of our agencies. This is especially true of the Department of Health, where frontline workers form the heart and soul of our day to day operations. Unfortunately, we continue to face a staffing shortage, a crisis exacerbated by the fact that it is increasingly difficult to retain supervisors or attract new talent into those positions. The reasons for this are multiple. As supervisors, we are the first to be called on in cases of emergency, but often last to be asked for our opinion when it comes to advocating for our positions. Because we lack legislation that enables collective bargaining, we are unable to come together and speak as a unified voice. As a result, we are isolated from our fellow supervisors, as well as from the employees we supervise.

All of these issues serve to make the positions undesirable to the people we desperately need to fill them. Before we can answer the question of how to adequately bring in new staff, we have to figure out how to treat the staff already here working so they want to stay here. That answer begins with this legislation, which empowers supervisors in the same way the employees they supervise are empowered. It brings us to the table, gives us a voice, and shows us the respect we deserve. I urge you to support HB 260. I urge you to vote for this critical piece of legislation, and I urge you to show supervisors that our positions are more than just a change in title.

Jahann Mentis-Williams
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