



Harford County
Public Library

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February 13, 2024

The Honorable Ben Barnes
Chair, Appropriations Committee
121 House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: HB 609 Education – Public Libraries – Collective Bargaining - UNFAVORABLE

Dear Chair Barnes and members of the Appropriations Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share the concerns of The Harford County Library system and indicate our **opposition** to House Bill 609. Although similar to prior introductions which have attempted to craft a one-size-fits-all collective bargaining framework for Maryland library systems regardless of number of employees or local governmental framework, House Bill 609 creates an unrealistic timetable and expectations for employees of a local library system. House Bill 609 circumvents the historical practice of allowing local legislative delegations to craft collective bargaining legislation designed for their unique local library system.

Maryland library systems are primarily funded by local appropriations and subject to adoption of the County's annual budget. Library employees **are not** county employees in the vast majority of library systems. House Bill 609's proposed collective bargaining timetable for submission to the local governing body does not align with the majority of county budgeting timetables and confirms the local governing body has no mandate to fund an agreement after months of negotiations and administrative expense. For instance, in Harford County, the County Council may only reduce the Executive's proposed budget and increase the Education budget. The County Council does not have authority to increase the library system budget.

While House Bill 609 exempts some jurisdictions that already have enabling legislation, it includes Howard County Library System that has enabling legislation passed in 2013 that they wish to retain. House Bill 609 fails to recognize that Maryland's local systems can range from less than 20 employees to over 500 and 75% have fewer than 250 employees. These smaller systems could potentially be saddled with increased administrative costs and reduced flexibility in personnel matters during the current fiscal projections that would have detrimental impact on service to our communities.

The collective bargaining framework outlined in House Bill 609 may be a good fit for some jurisdictions but the Harford County Board of Library Trustees and myself believe that this approach is not the best fit for the Harford County Public Library system.

Harford County Library appreciates your support of our libraries across Maryland, and we would respectfully request an UNFAVORABLE report for House Bill 609.

Sincerely yours,

Mary L. Hastler, Chief Executive Officer