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Appropriations Committee

Subcommittees

Capital Budget

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House Chair
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Committee

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

HB 609 – Library Workers Empowerment Act
February 13, 2024
House Appropriations Committee

Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Chang, Colleagues, thank you for the opportunity to present on my bill HB 609 to strengthen the bargaining power of library workers across Maryland.

What the Bill Does and Who it Covers:

- Currently, most library workers across the state lack comprehensive collective bargaining rights. The only exceptions are Baltimore, Prince George's and Montgomery counties who have already organized their unions and codified these rights, so they are not included in this bill. Enoch Pratt Library workers in Baltimore City have also organized and formed a union already, but they did so via a voluntary agreement, so they are included in this bill to codify and align their rights with the other counties. All other library systems in the state are included in the bill.
- For the included systems in the bill, HB 609 creates a clean, consistent process for library workers to form, join, and participate in a union and collectively bargain.
- The library workers covered under this legislation include librarians, shelvers, circulation assistants, cataloging assistants, technology, and video coordinators, building care workers, technicians, IT workers, library associates, and more. These workers will have the ability in unrepresented counties to make a choice if they want collective bargaining and who they wish to have represent them.
- Supervisors, managers, and confidential employees are not included in this bill.

Why the Bill is Important Now:

- Library workers are organizing for collective bargaining rights because they want and deserve a voice in their working conditions, pay, and benefits. Although our public libraries are managed by Boards of Trustees, the bulk of their funding comes from taxpayer funds and makes library employees part of the public sector. This bill would enable ALL public library employees to get the same collective bargaining rights that

other public sector workers in Maryland already have like teachers, firefighters, police, state and county employees, and like the library workers at our public K-12 and higher education institutions have.

- Libraries are cornerstones in our communities, and they are so much more than just books. They provide technology, job search support, classes and resources for families, COVID test kits and masks, and so much more. HB 605 is an opportunity for us to support the library workers who make our libraries run.
- Most importantly – this legislation eliminates the need for a patchwork approach where the General Assembly has to consider bills to enable individual county to collectively bargain. This bill would create one standard format to enable – not require – those employees across the state who would like to bargain.

What's different in the bill from last year:

- The changes in the bill this year are largely clarifying and ensure that no existing units are decertified by passing the bill, specifies that the employer can only create up to two bargaining units, and aligns the petition procedures with the Public Employee Relations Act that was passed by the General Assembly last session.

Last legislative session, this bill passed the Appropriations Committee 18-5 and the full House 101-35. Thank you for your consideration and I ask for a favorable report on HB 609.