

Written Testimony Submitted for the House Appropriations Committee
Testimony of Colin Chappell
HB 609 –The Library Workers Empowerment Act
February 13th, 2024

SUPPORT

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

My name is Colin Chappell, and I am a Library Associate II at the Linthicum branch of the Anne Arundel County Public Library system.

Our administration's response to the pandemic was an eye-opening experience. While it was fantastic that staff continued to be employed while the library was closed, we were never consulted about future steps taken towards reopening, neither in terms of when to reopen nor in terms of how to reopen. That top-down, board-driven decision-making has had deleterious effects on many aspects of our work and resulted in unpopular and unfair policies that fail to account for branch staff input.

Additionally, nearly everyone who works in a branch is a victim of the "working out of classification" issue. Additional out-of-classification responsibilities are often rotated, sometimes without warning, to staff who are not compensated more and who may not receive proper training beforehand.

I have often raised issues with branch management in the past. Some issues have been sincerely addressed, but so much of it depends on the quality of your supervisor and your branch management. If they hear you, they can often effect change. But when they don't, which is often, it can be almost impossible to have your voice heard in a meaningful way within the organization. I want to standardize this process. The quality of your work, or of your life, should not be dependent on who supervises you. It should be dependent on a contract, one that is collectively bargained and achieved through a collaborative process. This bill allows that, it brings us together, and it gives us a voice. Please support HB609.

Colin Chappell
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