

Written Testimony Submitted for the House Appropriations Committee
Testimony of Laura Kellman
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 Laura Kellman, and I am a Library Associate with Anne Arundel County Public Libraries. I work at the Severna Park branch, and am now in my tenth year. I want to form a union with my coworkers so that I can have breathing room. I want to have the security of knowing that if changes come, I have a voice in what they are and how they are implemented. I want to know that my ability to retire is secure, that my time and position are valued, and that I am respected as an integral part of the library system that I love so much.

Sadly, right now we do not have as much breathing room as we need. As the cost of living in Maryland soars, it is becoming more difficult to convince staff that they can hold their breath for another year. Even worse, it is becoming difficult to convince new hires to hold their breath at all. We are losing institutional knowledge at an unfortunate rate, and as we struggle to find folks to fill the new positions, it makes it even harder on the folks that choose to remain.

But with collective bargaining, we would have a voice. We would not have to hold our breath any longer, because we could speak to our administrations directly and strongly about what resources we need to succeed in our jobs. I urge you to vote favorable on the Library Workers Empowerment Act, HB 609, and give us the breathing room we so desperately need.

Laura Kellman
Library Associate
AACPL