

Written Testimony Submitted for the House Appropriations Committee
Testimony of Piyali Callahan
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 Piyali Callahan, and I am an Instructor & Research Specialist with Howard County Library System. I am writing today because I don't feel heard or seen. A few in upper management make decisions that impact me, my colleagues and the community. Sometimes we learn about changes at the same time as customers. The way decisions are made is very top heavy and out of sync with the life of staff who work in branches. This has led my coworkers and I to come together to form our union, Howard County Library Workers United, with AFSCME.

When one does not feel seen or heard, one loses motivation. I love the actual job and I thrive off knowing that my customers appreciate my work. I want to continue to give my best services to the community I serve. I think we can be a vibrant and dynamic library system, doing fantastic work in the community if the phrase “respect for each other” was seriously enforced. We lacked a basic desk for almost two years to do our job, and it took a herculean effort to get it restored into our branch.

Library staff is the soul of the library. We are the face of the library. We love our community and do our best to serve our community. Hear us, pay us, let us spend time with our loved ones, give us a proper work life balance so we can thrive. Because we already have collective bargaining rights as library employees in Howard County, my coworkers and I have been able to form our union and look forward to engaging in a collective bargaining process. I want to see all library employees across the state of Maryland enjoy the right to collectively bargain- please pass HB 609 and support our library workers.

Piyali Callahan
Instructor & Research Specialist
HCLS