

Written Testimony Submitted for the House Appropriations Committee
Testimony of Brad Noble, member, AFSCME Maryland
HB 260 – AN ACT concerning State Personnel – Collective Bargaining – Supervisory Employees
January 26th, 2024

SUPPORT

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

My name is Yolanda Downing. I am a Lieutenant at the Chesapeake Detention Facility. I am here to advocate for essential legislation that can positively impact not only the lives of supervisors but also the overall effectiveness of our state services – the expansion of collective bargaining rights for supervisors. I am asking you to vote in favor of HB 260.

Everyone in this room is a state employee, and I know we all can agree that we didn't become state employees to get rich. Even if you join state service straight out of high school, and it was initially just a job, you stayed, like many others, because of your passion for people, your desire to serve your community, and your genuine care for others.

As state supervisors, we carry out unseen work that ensures the smooth operation of our departments. From putting in extra hours to ensure staff safety, conducting trainings, and addressing various operational issues, we are the backbone of the workforce. However, our passion and dedication are currently coming at a price – our voice.

What happens when this backbone finally breaks? When supervisors are consistently stretched thin with no means to advocate for ourselves or our work, people leave. Additionally, officers witness our sacrifices and may feel disincientized to give up their time with their families or their union rights for added stress and stagnation. Consequently, we end up with fewer supervisors available to fulfill critical duties, perpetuating a cycle of understaffing and increased workload.

These prolonged work hours also take a toll on our personal lives. Many of us resort to taking on additional jobs to make ends meet, inadvertently spending less time with our families. Despite our initial commitment to serve our communities, it seems we are unintentionally neglecting our own homes.

The fear is that this lifestyle may perpetuate a cycle of absentee parenting, directly contradicting the purpose of state service, which is to support and strengthen communities. The solution, as many of us see it, lies in advocating for collective bargaining rights. This would provide us with a seat at the negotiating table, enabling us to push for fair wages, better benefits, and improved working conditions. It is a crucial step towards ensuring that our dedication to public service does not come at the expense of our own well-being and family life.

Thank you for considering our perspective, and I sincerely hope for your support in this important matter.

Yolanda Downing
Lieutenant
Chesapeake Detention Facility