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Testimony of Lisa Blackwell-Brown Secretary Treasurer, UFCW Local 1994 MCGEO in support of
HB1402 – Montgomery County – State’s Attorney’s Office Personnel – Application of County Personnel Laws and Collective Bargaining

During the summer of 2023, a group of Montgomery County State’s Attorney’s Office employees contacted our Union to discuss the prospect of securing collective bargaining rights. The compelling reason for their interest in collective bargaining was to secure a voice in their workplace and a seat at the table during the County’s budget process.

Unfortunately, these attorneys and their coworkers do not have a legal avenue to secure that voice. And they won’t unless you pass HB 1402.

We strongly urge that you consider the fundamental human right – the right to a voice in your workplace – when considering this bill. The employees of the State’s Attorney’s office are no less deserving of collective bargaining than any other employee, whether it be public defenders, health professionals, social workers and most other Maryland public employees.

In talking to these dedicated professionals, we learned that they have no workplace protection and no due process if they make a mistake. They have no written employment policy. They are forced to work long hours without appropriate compensation which impairs their mental and physical well-being.

They have seen a huge turnover in their staff over the past several years and continue to experience unprecedented recruitment and retention challenges. The staff are trying to manage oppressive workloads while their wages are falling behind the market. Unionization can provide these employees with the means to address these and other employment problems.

Unionization can offer legal protections against unfair labor practices, discrimination, and wrongful termination. States' attorneys may feel more secure in their positions knowing they have the backing of a union to advocate for their rights, allowing them to better represent victims and their families.

Through collective bargaining, states' attorneys can have a voice in shaping budgets that enhance their profession and the criminal justice system in Montgomery County.

This legislation establishes a legal right for the employees of the State’s Attorney’s Office to decide through a prescribed process whether they wish to be represented by a labor union and engage in collective bargaining—a right that should not be denied!

We urge you to pass Bill 1402 and give these employees their fundamental right to a voice on the job.

Thank you.

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