



190 W. Ostend St., #101  
Baltimore, MD 21230  
Phone: 410-547-1515  
Email: [info@afscmemd.org](mailto:info@afscmemd.org)

Patrick Moran – President

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**HB 609 - Education - Public Libraries - Collective Bargaining  
(Library Workers Empowerment Act)**

**Appropriations Committee  
February 13, 2024**

**FAVORABLE**

AFSCME Council 3 supports HB 609. This legislation enables collective bargaining rights for public library workers across the state. HB 609 applies to all Maryland public library systems except Baltimore, Prince George's, and Montgomery counties who have unionized already and have these rights codified into law. For the included counties, HB 609 will provide a modern, fair, and consistent process for public library workers to unionize and collectively bargain.

Libraries are the cornerstones of our community. They are so much more than just books – they provide technology, job search support, classes and resources for families, COVID test kits and masks, and so much more. Our libraries offer integral support to the public, and this is a crucial opportunity to support the library workers who make our libraries run. Library workers include librarians, shelvers, circulation assistants, cataloging assistants, technology and video coordinators, building care technicians, IT workers, library associates, and more. Library workers deserve to have collective bargaining rights, and a voice in their working conditions, pay, and benefits. Instead of a piecemeal approach that covers only some library workers in the state, this legislation will allow workers in public libraries across Maryland the opportunity to choose if they want to form a union without coming back to the legislature year after year.

AFSCME has organized tens of thousands of library workers across the country. In Maryland, AFSCME already represents workers at the Enoch Pratt Free Library, the University System of Maryland, Baltimore City Community College, St. Mary's College of Maryland, and Morgan State University. Library workers in both Howard County and Anne Arundel County are organizing their unions with AFSCME Council 3 as well.

Similar legislation passed the House last year with bipartisan support. Please support our public library workers and provide a favorable report on HB 609.