



Testimony in Support of
HB0609 Education - Public Libraries –
Collective Bargaining (Library Workers Empowerment Act)
Appropriations Committee
February 13, 2024

TO: Hon. Ben Barnes, Chair; Mark S. Chang, Vice Chair and members of the Appropriations Committee
FROM: Carol Rosenblatt, President, MD /DC Alliance for Retired Americans

On behalf of the MD/DC Alliance for Retired Americans we seek your support of HB0609. The MD/DC Alliance for Retired Americans is a grassroots advocacy organization with more than 96,000 members. It is part of the Alliance for Retired Americans, which was founded in 2001 by the AFL -CIO and has 4.4 million members nationwide. Our members come from all walks of life and are united in the belief that everyone deserves a secure retirement after a lifetime of hard work. The MD/DC Alliance works closely with the labor movement and other grassroots organizations to build a more just and secure future for all Americans. We have retired members in our chapter from a large number of unions and allied organizations.

Library workers provide an essential service to the community as cited by the AFL-CIO's Department of Professional Employees, "In 2020, more than 17,000 U.S. public libraries circulated about 2.1 billion print and electronic materials and offered 3.6 million programs, attended by about 79 million members of the public. Children's programs accounted for 53 percent of all programs offered, serving almost 50 million children and parents. Electronic media, computer use and internet access are an increasing component of library materials and services, and e-books now comprise 32 percent of all collection materials. In addition, library patrons accessed 284,500 public computers over 122 million times during 2020. Libraries provide important training and educational programs for the public..."

We know that permitting public library workers to collectively bargain through a union for wages and terms and conditions of employment makes for a better work life and helps to retain employees. Union members are more likely to be covered by a retirement plan, health insurance, and paid sick leave and to earn higher wages than their non-union counterparts. Many librarians are required to have a master's degree and assistants also frequently have acquired higher education.

Library workers are important members of the community and should be treated fairly and be able to collectively bargain as so many other workers in various professions and industries are permitted to do.

We ask for your favorable vote for HB0609 and thank you for your consideration.