

Written Testimony Submitted for the House Appropriations Committee
Testimony of Ryan Dize
HB 609 –The Library Workers Empowerment Act
February 13th, 2024

SUPPORT

My name is Ryan Dize, and I am a Circulation Assistant at the Linthicum Branch of the Anne Arundel County Public Library system.

Collective bargaining is critical for our library systems. It would help us have a voice not only with the library board, but also with those outside the board. Currently my wife and I are struggling to have enough to buy a home. We certainly couldn't afford to live in Anne Arundel County. With collective bargaining I think we'd have a better shot at showing the community the reality of living here.

I feel like leadership often dismisses the general library worker's opinion despite us being the ones with perspective to see how their decisions are implemented. Several branches have staff shortages because Part-time Hourly (PTH) employees have been rooted to a single branch when before we had a similar sized pool of PTH Employees for an entire area. This allowed flexibility in staffing and more hours and experience for PTHs that wanted it. Now that's gone.

I am constantly worried as I look at other states and how their libraries have become battlegrounds for social issues. I am deeply worried that if there's a change on our board we could be in the same predicament. Did you know before our current board we were not allowed to have any LGBTQ+ or Pride decorations? Despite many of my coworkers being LGBTQ+, we couldn't even have a display. We need security for the most vulnerable.

I hope library leadership sees that we won't stop trying to achieve our voice. I hope they see how important this is to us. This isn't just about any single issue, it is about the future of our libraries. Please pass HB 609, and let us help.

Ryan Dize
Circ Assistant
AACPL