

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

SUPPORT

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

My name is Cherise Tasker, and I am an Instructor and Research Specialist with Howard County Library System, where I have worked for eleven years. At Howard County, we have a talented workforce that is closely in touch with the community. If our staff had a voice, we'd be better stewards of the public money and resources that are entrusted to us.

Regarding safety, we have potentially violent customers and do not have adequate safeguards in place to protect staff. For example, at my desk, I have no phone, no cell service, and no close access to a panic button. When my colleagues and I are asked to do jobs we were not hired for, the work product suffers. When time consuming and costly projects are initiated by library leadership and not completed, the public misses out on services they need. Feeling unsafe at work is something you bring home with you. When you hear of news stories of workplace violence, it triggers anxiety.

I feel that I am not being paid to work to my full potential. I have a graduate degree and extensive work experience, but my ideas are often silenced and I feel undervalued. Library workers are first responders in countless ways. For many in the community, we are the one source of free support. If library workers are not allowed to do their jobs safely and to the best of their ability, the money the community invests in the library is wasted. We want to make sure that does not happen. We want an open line of communication. We want to collectively bargain. Please Support HB 609, and give us the ability to be active partners in our workplaces.

Cherise Tasker
Instructor and Research Specialist
HCLS