



COUNTY COUNCIL OF HARFORD COUNTY, MARYLAND

Jacob D. Bennett

Council Member, District F

212 S. Bond Street, Bel Air, Maryland 21014

410-638-3526

jdbennett@harfordcountycouncil.com

February 9, 2024

Delegate Ben Barnes, Chair
Appropriations Committee
House Office Building Room 121
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Ben Barnes, Chair, and Appropriation Committee Members,

My name is Jacob Bennett. I am the Harford County Councilmember representing District F, which runs from Havre De Grace through Abingdon.

I am writing to you in support of HB609, and I am asking for you to support HB609 as well.

In our great state of Maryland, many public employees currently benefit from the right to organize. From our police to our educators to our DPW workers, and now most recently our community college workers, public employees are able to stand up for their quality of life and the issues that impact their community.

As a county council member, I find myself in constant communication with these local unions to know the needs of our workers. These conversations help guide my action during budget season and help me know the true condition of our public services at the ground floor. There is no such organization for me to communicate with in the library system, leading to my understanding of the system to be driven nearly exclusively by the views of leadership. I often work with our Harford County Public Library leadership, but I wish I had a pathway to hear the voices of the workers as well.

I am a member of Maryland State Education Associate through my day job as a kindergarten teacher. This has impacted my life in such a positive way and rooted me in the profession I love.

Why is it then that we still do not afford this same opportunity for our library workers? When it comes to collective action, they are left out in the cold.

Any argument against their right to collective voice has been heard a thousand times before in history. It will grow budgets unsustainably, it will break the relationship between leadership and workers, it will hurt leadership autonomy, etc. These arguments are tired and old, and they have never come to fruition when any other public employee group has been given the right to organize.

At the end of the day, this legislation is about doing a good and decent thing for the hard-working people who make our libraries function each and every day.

This has been a long time coming, and in my opinion, it is long overdue (so you should be thankful library workers do not charge a late fee).

In Solidarity,

Jacob Bennett
Harford County Councilmember
District F