



March 20, 2024

House Bill 609

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

Senate Finance Committee

Position: FAVORABLE

Anne Arundel County **SUPPORTS** House Bill 609 – Education - Public Libraries - Collective Bargaining (Library Workers Empowerment Act), which establishes a collective bargaining process for full- or part-time non-management employees of public library systems throughout the State.

Collective bargaining is a valuable tool for workers to come together as one voice and advocate for equity and inclusion. But this bill will not require any library workers to join a union - this bill just provides a path to unionization and leaves it up to library workers to certify representatives if the workers choose to unionize. Under current state law, there is no uniform guidance for library employees to organize for collective bargaining if they wish to do so. As a result, libraries have disjointed and complicated processes that vary widely by local jurisdictions. This bill addresses this issue by establishing a uniform and efficient process that will benefit both employees and employers.

Library workers are committed public servants who play an essential role in our community. Our libraries offer a safe and welcoming environment that provides residents with internet access, educational and cultural programs, and other essential services. In fact, library workers are often on the front lines of critical issues as the primary distributor of information and resources, such as during the COVID-19 crisis. Most recently, in Anne Arundel County, they played a critical part in our pilot gun violence mitigation effort by distributing more than 4,000 free gun locks. We are currently partnering with our library workers to distribute 7,000 Chromebooks to eligible residents through the state's Connected Devices program.

This bill sends a strong message and will empower library staff to address challenges and provide better service for all. For all of these reasons, I respectfully request a **FAVORABLE** report on House Bill 609.

Stuart Pittman
County Executive