

JARED SOLOMON  
Legislative District 18  
Montgomery County

DEPUTY SPEAKER PRO TEM

Appropriations Committee

*Subcommittees*

Chair, Oversight Committee  
on Personnel

Capital Budget

House Chair, Joint Audit and  
Evaluation Committee



The Maryland House of Delegates  
6 Bladen Street, Room 312  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
301-858-3130 · 410-841-3130  
800-492-7122 Ext. 3130  
Fax 301-858-3053 · 410-841-3053  
Jared.Solomon@house.state.md.us

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**HB 609 – Library Workers Empowerment Act**  
**March 20, 2024**  
**Senate Finance Committee**

Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Klausmeier, Colleagues, thank you for the opportunity to present on HB 609 to strengthen the bargaining power of library workers across Maryland.

**What the Bill Does and Who it Covers:**

- Currently, most library workers across the state lack comprehensive collective bargaining rights. The only exceptions are Baltimore, Prince George's and Montgomery counties who have already organized their unions and codified these rights, so they are not included in this bill. Enoch Pratt Library workers in Baltimore City have also organized and formed a union already, but they did so via a voluntary agreement, so they are included in this bill to codify and align their rights with the other counties. All other library systems in the state are included in the bill.
- For the included systems in the bill, HB 609 creates a clean, consistent process for library workers to form, join, and participate in a union and collectively bargain.
- The library workers covered under this legislation include librarians, shelvers, circulation assistants, cataloging assistants, technology, and video coordinators, building care workers, technicians, IT workers, library associates, and more. These workers will have the ability in unrepresented counties to make a choice if they want collective bargaining and who they wish to have represent them.
- Supervisors, managers, and confidential employees are not included in this bill.

**Why the Bill is Important Now:**

- Library workers are organizing for collective bargaining rights because they want and deserve a voice in their working conditions, pay, and benefits. Although our public libraries are managed by Boards of Trustees, the bulk of their funding comes from

taxpayer funds and makes library employees part of the public sector. This bill would enable ALL public library employees to get the same collective bargaining rights that other public sector workers in Maryland already have like teachers, firefighters, police, state and county employees, and like the library workers at our public K-12 and higher education institutions have.

- Libraries are cornerstones in our communities, and they are so much more than just books. They provide technology, job search support, classes and resources for families, COVID test kits and masks, and so much more. HB 605 is an opportunity for us to support the library workers who make our libraries run.
- Most importantly – this legislation eliminates the need for a patchwork approach where the General Assembly has to consider bills to enable individual county to collectively bargain. This bill would create one standard format to enable – not require – those employees across the state who would like to bargain.

### **How Has the Bill Been Amended:**

During consideration in the House, I worked closely as the bill sponsor and subcommittee chair with the Library Administrators and unions to reach compromise language. The bill has the following changes:

- On Page 3, and throughout the bill, the “Governing Body of the Library System” is changed to reflect the “Governing Body of the Applicable County where the library system resides.” This change clarifies which governing entity ultimately has authority over the budget, which is in all cases the governing body of the jurisdiction not the library board.
- We amended HB 609 to make arbitration over disciplinary actions a permissive subject of bargaining, rather than mandatory.
- Finally, we increased the number of days the Board of Trustees has to approve a negotiated contract from 5 days to 14 days.

Many of the other changes that were proposed could not be accepted because they are already current law under the Public Employee Relations Act, which was signed into law in 2023.

**This bill before you passed the House of Delegates 100-33. Thank you for your consideration and I ask for a favorable report on HB 609.**