

Written Testimony: Ginger L. Noble
HB 604 (Arbitration Reform for State Employees Act of 2026)

I've been a member of the AFSCME Maryland Bargaining Team for over 9 years. This has provided me with a wide range of experience on how things are handled from both sides. The current system for negotiating contracts in state government and higher education lacks a meaningful impasse procedure. I personally witnessed this occur on multiple occasions. I was even a witness during the Unfair Labor Practice case. Currently, an impasse results negotiations and can carry on for a long time without resolution and/or disputes end with management just doing whatever they want to anyways. It's disheartening to be told that the fact-finder agrees with just about everything, but has no authority to enact the decision nor did it impact the urgency to fairly negotiate.

The only way to properly address the impasse issue is to pass binding arbitration. This is when a neutral third party is brought in to evaluate proposals and make binding decisions. This ensures both parties are accountable to negotiating in good faith.

A number of our surrounding local jurisdictions already have won the right to binding arbitration; however, the Maryland state government is behind the curve on this. I've personally helped get out the vote to assist our other labor brothers earn the right to have binding arbitration. Eight Maryland jurisdictions already allow binding arbitration at the local government level (including in our own Western region), all of our public K-12 schools have binding arbitration, as well as 26 states and D.C. nationally for their employees. Those entities that have binding arbitration have been shown to have a greater success of settling an agreement before arbitration is necessary far more than those negotiations actually ending up in arbitration.

Please pass HB 604 to help us negotiate more efficiently.

Thank you,

Ginger L. Noble, MBA

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