



Charles County Government

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TESTIMONY OF
Reuben B. Collins, Esq., President
County Commissioners of Charles County
BEFORE
House Appropriations Committee
House Bill 443 – “Southern Maryland Code Counties - Collective Bargaining”
Tuesday, February 4, 2020
1:00 p.m.

Good afternoon. I am pleased to provide testimony in support of House Bill 443 entitled, “Southern Maryland Code Counties – Collective Bargaining.” House Bill 443 allows Southern Maryland Code home rule Counties, including Charles County, to enact a collective bargaining law for regular county employees.

Many employees in these counties already have bargaining rights and therefore a voice in their workplaces: teachers, and other employees of the board of education; Sheriff’s deputies; and, Charles County fire and EMS employees. This bill permits a collective bargaining law to cover Charles County’s other employees.

There are approximately 650 employees of Charles County who want to have a voice through collective bargaining, and Charles County wants to give those employees a voice. This bill permits – but does not require – Charles County to enact a local collective bargaining law. That is consistent with Charles County’s express powers of home rule. And, Calvert and St. Mary’s Counties shall have this express power too if they become code home rule counties.

The bill requires the most standard elements for collective bargaining for public employees: inclusion of regular employees; exclusion of supervisory and managerial employees; representation chosen by the employees; the ability to resort to arbitration to resolve impasses; a prohibition on strikes and lockouts; and a process for both sides to work out disputes over “unfair” practices.

The details of the collective bargaining system are for the county to determine and enact by local law. Details include how a representative is chosen; when and how bargaining proceeds; when and how arbitration is utilized; and what are fair and unfair bargaining practices.

Charles County is a growing county, with an increasing number of employees. Those employees want and deserve a voice in their workplace. Many of their peers in the county have such a voice. Many of their peers across the State – and nearly all in state service – have such a voice. Good government comes from fair and just employment practices, and advocacy by and for employees.

For all these reasons, I respectfully ask the House Appropriations Committee to report favorably on House Bill 443.