



Testimony of Todd Holden, AFSCME Local 1072
HB 641 – Collective Bargaining – Chancellor of the University System of Maryland – Negotiations
Appropriations
February 25, 2020
Support

My name is Todd Holden and for the past eight years, I have been employed as a web developer at the University of Maryland College Park. I am also a proud member of AFSCME Local 1072 and serve as a shop steward and as an at-large member of the local's executive board.

Sadly, you may recall the mold crisis that hit College Park over a year ago. Students and our members were sickened, and – as has been well documented – a student died. The *Washington Post* exposed the failure of UMCP and the University System in dealing with the crisis. Our members were on the frontlines, asked to clean the mold without proper protective gear or cleansers. When we saw the depth of the problem, we tried to engage, and then fought, with College Park's administration to increase their response and appropriately work with us and students about the mold problems on campus. We tried, and were generally rebuffed.

The University System never even engaged AFSCME in working through solutions or talking to us about their UMCP-centric report on mold. What's most stunning is that this isn't an isolated incident: our members have seen and reported ongoing mold issues at other schools including Bowie State, UMBC, and UMES. We have no direct bargaining relationship with the USM to bargain health and safety issues, including mold prevention and remediation. This is a systemwide problem that has our members' and students' safety at ongoing risk.

We should be able to bargain with the system that oversees everyone and is dictating responses. As we sit here, my colleague at AFSCME local 1072, Saul Walker continues to install dehumidifiers in just about every dorm at UMCP, applying band-aids to deep-rooted problems. Wouldn't it be better that he and the staff that have been tasked with working on mold to engage with USM, negotiate and provide informed input on how to fix the problem at their campus and throughout the system where it is a problem?

There are consequences for inaction: when workers' voices are shunned aside, student services, student experiences, and the universities' missions to serve the public are inevitably compromised, and likely negatively impacted. Plainly acknowledging the deficiency present in the current system and fixing it will help Maryland's universities retain the standards of excellence we are each striving to achieve.

For these reasons, it is my hope your committee will support SB 660.