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Finance Committee
Chair, Rules Committee

Joint Committees

Children, Youth, and Families
Ending Homelessness
Fair Practices and State Personnel Oversight
Management of Public Funds

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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
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Testimony of Senator Joanne C. Benson
**SB 388 – Circuit Court and District Court of Maryland Employees-
Collective Bargaining**

Good afternoon Madame Chair, Chairman Smith and esteemed members of the Finance Committee and Judicial Proceedings Committee. SB 388 would provide the choice of collective bargaining to the largest group of state employees that do not have that opportunity – employees in the court system of Maryland. This bill would allow an employee in the Circuit and District Courts to file a petition for an election of a union to represent them. If a sufficient number of employees sign up, then an election would be authorized. All eligible employees would be entitled to a vote.

This legislation specifically addresses clerical, administrative, constabulary, maintenance and housekeeping employees – it does not include judges. These are all employees who could actually help improve not only working conditions, but also make organized suggestions of ways to improve services. This is critical because these employees are on the front lines of interacting with the public and carrying out the policies of the courts.

There are already thirteen states that allow collective bargaining for court employees. In some cases, they are included with other state employees in contract negotiations and in several States they have a separate agreement for court employees.

The bills also create a Judicial Labor Relations Board. The Chief Judge appoints three of the members and the Governor appoints two. Of those appointed by the Chief Judge, one is a member of the Judiciary, and one is recommended respectively by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House. The Governor appoints one member of the public and one from the National Academy of Arbitrators.

I also want to note that we are drafting an amendment to take out a provision in the bill regarding the service fee provision due to the U.S. Supreme Court 2018 decision.

This bill is fair. SB 388 grants employees the opportunity to have a voice in determining their working conditions. It is modeled after a process that has worked well for state employees. I urge you to support this bill by giving these employees the right to have a democratic vote on whether they want to negotiate, and if they want to negotiate, who will represent them.

Thus, I urge a favorable vote for SB 388.