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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
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**HB 486 Testimony - Collective Bargaining –
Chancellor of the University System of Maryland**

- I'm proud to present HB 486 a common sense bill that would end the patchwork and inefficient system of campus by campus collective bargaining among the 12 University System of Maryland (USM) institutions, centers, and regional centers.
- Under the current system of campus collective bargaining, more than 30 individual contracts must be negotiated throughout the system and ultimately approved by the Chancellor and the Board of Regents.
- HB 486 would replace an inefficient and duplicative system with the same collective bargaining set-up we use for the rest of state government. For all state agencies – which range from child welfare services and correctional officers to agricultural inspectors, water quality scientists, and business development specialists – there is one master contract negotiated between AFSCME and the Governor.
- Just like the rest of state government, this legislation would consolidate bargaining between the Chancellor and the Board of Regents and AFSCME locals at institutions across the state allowing for side agreements to be negotiated when individual circumstances dictate it:
 - Ex: Parking at College Park or snow days at Frostburg State.
- Despite what you'll hear about each President and campus having full autonomy, under the current system, existing contracts must still be approved by the Board of Regents. Individual campuses regularly seek approval from the USM over details and contracts can be delayed for months because of this back and forth.
- Despite this “campus autonomy,” the USM sets policy that controls wages, compensation leave and hours, and other working conditions. But because within the USM, local units cannot bargain directly with the Chancellor and the Board of Regents, these issues are regularly ignored, when they are raised.
- For example, at individual campuses, local units are regularly told they can't bargain certain issues because those issues are controlled by the Board of Regents:
 - At Bowie State, local negotiators wanted to agree to fair share language but were told by the USM that they could not.

- At College Park, local unions are regularly told by school management that they cannot negotiate wages because they are set by the USM.
- At the University of Maryland Eastern Shore, local unions were also told that they could not bargain wages as well as a host of other issues because they were controlled by the USM.
- The inability to bargain uniform working conditions was brought into stark focus this past year, as many campuses adopted a mish-mash of health and safety standards to protect staff from the Coronavirus.
- In fact, there are [75 different personnel & human resource procedures](#) that the Board of Regents and the Chancellor have adopted to govern on a system-wide basis. Despite what you may hear later during this hearing, these policies - again set for the entire USM - have not jeopardized our system's national accreditation.
- There is a system-wide policy for [social media](#), 85 pages of system-wide [procurement policies](#), and of course a system-wide policy for using "fund balances," which play such a critical role in annual budgeting for each campus. Accessing these "campus funds" of course requires approval by the Chancellor and Board of Regents:

"Institutions with accumulated and uncommitted unrestricted fund balances beyond the institution's benchmark level of unrestricted fund balances **may request the use of the unrestricted fund balance to pay for a project or initiative's spending needs by forwarding a request to the Chancellor and Vice Chancellor for Administration and Finance, or the Board of Regents, as spending approval requirements dictate.**"

- Additionally, the USM and seven campus engage in voluntary "coalition bargaining," which attempts to create some level of uniformity for contract negotiations. This bargaining is led by the USM, who negotiates on behalf of the campuses that are part of the coalition.
- This set-up adds to the already complicated, confusing, and unnecessary patchwork of negotiations. Why do some campuses bargain together while others are separate?
- HB 486 would enable AFSCME to negotiate directly with the USM Chancellor and Board of regents, the body that sets wages and employment policies, streamlining the process and likely making it cheaper and far more efficient. If this system is good enough for our incredibly diverse state workforce, it should be good enough for our university system.
- Fundamentally, this legislation is about fairness. It's about ensuring that our unionized workers are able to fairly and honestly negotiate the issues that are fundamental to their employment.
- With no fiscal note and likely a possible savings, I urge a favorable report for HB 641.