



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Marc Elrich
County Executive

February 8, 2021

TO: The Honorable Maggie McIntosh
Chair, Appropriations Committee

FROM: Marc Elrich
County Executive

RE: House Bill 894 – *Education - Community Colleges - Collective Bargaining – Support*

I am writing to you to express my support for House Bill 894, legislation that grants collective bargaining rights to employees at Maryland’s community colleges.

As County Executive, my experience negotiating with police officers, firefighters, and other public employees with collective bargaining rights has been positive. In fact, we have found that even when budgets are tight, we have been able to resolve issues large and small, both economic and non-economic, in negotiating with organized employees. When workers have a seat at the table, organizations run smoother. *In Montgomery County, staff and faculty at Montgomery Community College have their rights to organize and collectively negotiate recognized, which has benefitted students, faculty, staff, and the general public alike.*

Now that Maryland is looking for a way forward during and after COVID, we need to recognize the central role our community colleges will play. Already they provide an affordable education to young Marylanders, and they will no doubt be the source of professional retraining for workers who need a fresh start in the new economy. For so many Maryland workers, our community colleges will be the lifeline they need to recover after COVID. Making sure that instructors and staff can collectively bargain will be essential to the smooth operations of community colleges in this rapidly evolving environment. Educators and student-facing staff bring to the table the first-hand knowledge administrators need to make informed decisions about the future of their colleges during and beyond COVID.

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The State of Maryland bargains collectively with its public employees, yet at some of our community colleges, we still have public employees who are denied their right to collectively bargain. Not only do I appreciate the value and efficiency that comes from collective bargaining, but it has become clearer since COVID began that workers need to have a seat at the table.

I ask that the Committee advance this bill. Supporting students, faculty, and staff of our community colleges is the right thing to do and can be done this Session.

cc: Members of the Appropriations Committee