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SB 138 / HB 45 - SUPPORT

Rachael Medina
Librarian, Baltimore County Public Library /
International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers
rachaelmster@gmail.com 443-540-0648

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Baltimore County Public Library - Collective Bargaining Finance Committee / Appropriations Committee February 4, 2021

Dear Madam Chair, Vice Chair Feldman and members of the Finance Committee,

My name is Lauren Buell and I have worked for the library system for three years. I am a Part-Time Librarian and I work at the Baltimore County Public Library (BCPL) Perry Hall Branch.

As a Librarian, I assist customers with the use of print and on-line resources, including e-reader devices and I develop and maintain a portion of the Library's collection. I am also involved in library-related programs, outreach services, and handle customer complaints.

Good afternoon, Madam Chair and the distinguished members of the committee. Thank you for allowing my colleagues and me from Baltimore County Public Library the honor of speaking to you today. A special thank you also to Senator Hettleman, our bill sponsor and the Senator for my District, for bringing this to the committee's attention.

My name is Rachael Medina, and I am a librarian working full-time at the Parkville-Carney Branch. I have worked at BCPL for my entire 10-year career, starting part-time in the circulation department and working up to my current position as a Librarian III. I have worked at several of BCPL's 19 branches, and gotten to know our organization, staff, and customers well. I love my work and am proud to serve the residents of Baltimore County every day.

Through the years, I have seen the strengths and weaknesses of BCPL. Our full-time workers have access to a generous benefits package, but those benefits are not extended to our part-time staff. We have a forward-looking Strategic Plan that focuses on inclusion, diversity, and equity, but we struggle to put those ideals into practice. I believe that by forming a union, BCPL's staff can negotiate for policies that will help us work together to sustain our strengths and mitigate our weaknesses.

One issue that particularly concerns me relates to BCPL's hiring and promotional process. I have often mentored and supervised talented staff who end up walking away from a career at BCPL because they cannot successfully navigate our confusing and opaque promotional system. Our staff often perform duties well beyond their job description, sometimes for years at a time and are never compensated for that additional level of work, in the hopes that this extra effort will lead to promotion. I have participated in multiple hiring panels and seen first-hand how vulnerable our interview process is to racial and economic bias, groupthink, and favoritism. Our staff is our greatest asset. A more transparent and structured hiring process with clear paths to successful promotion can help BCPL retain and attract better qualified, more diverse staff, leading to better service for the residents of Baltimore County.

I strongly believe that having access to union representation is our staff's best hope to have a voice in shaping how BCPL responds to this and other important issues. Passing this bill, SB 138, is the first step. Help us to make our voices heard, and to have the opportunity to work together with our management and administration in pursuit of a better BCPL, both for our staff and our customers.

Thank you again for your time and attention. I urge a favorable report on SB 138.

Thank you.