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SB 138 / HB 45 - SUPPORT

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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,

This is my first time testifying and it is an honor to have the ability to speak with you on the importance of having a union for the Baltimore County Public Library's (BCPL) staff.

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.

Communication is very important with any business, and when it is lacking, it can decrease staff morale throughout the entire organization. If we have a union, we will have a coalition behind us to be able to approach administration with questions, comments and concerns of library staff. Right now, we have no effective way to do that in real time. However, I believe that with a union, people will be able to have their voices heard.

One of my concerns is part-time workers who must work with the public during a pandemic. Librarians like myself, have no access to health care benefits and I worry about what will happen to me if they get sick or contract the coronavirus. I have never really thought about our lack of health care access until Covid-19 struck, but I believe if workers are expected to work during a pandemic and be treated as "essential" employees, then we deserve to breathe a little easier knowing, we have health care benefits.

I am also very aware that getting a union does not mean a guarantee of benefits, but at least we will have a seat at the table where we have an opportunity to negotiate some of these benefits.

Another problem we have is that Human Resources will only allow us administrative leave twice a year. This is a problem. For example, if your library branch closes for more than that, or if you are exposed to Covid-19, you must be tested twice and wait for those results, before you can return to work. After the second time occurs, you must use your personal leave and cannot telework. That needs to change.

We have to have a voice at work. We want respect and we our issues that are beyond our control heard. I feel the only way we will be able to achieve this, is if we have a qualified labor organization behind us. They can support us with professional representatives that know labor law.

Thank you for your time and for giving me the opportunity to voice my concerns on legislation that will allow us to have collective bargaining. I urge a favorable report on SB 138.

Thank you.