

Written Testimony Submitted for the House Appropriations Committee
Cheryl Hughes-Redd, Member, Maryland Defenders Union, AFSCME Local 423
HB 90 - State Personnel Management System - Office of the Public Defender – Placement and
Collective Bargaining
Sponsor: Del. Shaneka Henson
Appropriations Committee, Tuesday, January 18, 2022

SUPPORT

Dear Chair McIntosh, Vice-Chair Chang, and Members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Cheryl Hughes-Redd and I am a paralegal at the Maryland Office of the Public Defender. I am also a proud member of AFSCME Local 423 the Maryland Defenders Union. I am asking for your support in voting YES on House Bill 90, to extend collective bargaining to the Office of the Public Defender employees. We believe that we should have the right to have a seat at the table just like 30,000 other state employees to bargain our wages and working conditions!

Every time I go to the supermarket and see the prices of food I think about collective bargaining. Every time I need a new coat or a new pair of shoes, I think about collective bargaining. I have worked for the Office of the Public Defender for 17 years and **every time** I hear that one of my fellow core staff has to work a second or third job just to put food on the table and pay their bills, I think about collective bargaining.

There is no need for my co-workers to have to think about how they are going to put food on the table when they work too hard, every single day. No one should have to have to make the choice between buying groceries and paying their rent.

Dozens of core staff have left our agency, because no one heard them when they said, I can't help my children do their homework because I have to work a second job. I have to move in with my elderly parents because I can't afford my rent, monthly bills, and childcare. Children should not have to always see their parents worried, stressed and tired.

It is a horrible feeling to spend 8+ hours a day, 5 days a week at a job that cannot pay your bills, cannot put food on the table, and cannot put clothes on the back of people that depend on you most. This is why we are asking for your support. Vote YES on HB 90 so the hard working OPD employees can have a voice on the job, and advocate for a better agency.

Cheryl Hughes-Redd
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