



MARYLAND STATE & D.C. AFL-CIO

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HB 770 – Enoch Pratt Free Library – Collective Bargaining House Appropriations Committee March 1, 2022

SUPPORT

**Donna S. Edwards
President
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Madam Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 770 – Enoch Pratt Free Library – Collective Bargaining. My name is Donna S. Edwards, and I am the President of the Maryland State and District of Columbia AFL-CIO. On behalf of Maryland’s 340,000 union members, I offer the following comments.

HB 770 is an affirmation of our State’s values to encourage and empower workers to have a voice in discussing with employers their safety concerns, productivity, pay and benefits, and other working conditions. This is critically important with everything we have witnessed since March of 2020 and the COVID pandemic. *Fundamentally, this is enabling legislation. It does not mandate a union. It does not force any worker to join or oppose a union.* It simply allows workers to decide, for themselves, what their path forward will be.

The freedom to form and join a union is core to the U.N. Universal Declaration on Human Rights and is an “enabling” right—a fundamental right that ensures the ability to protect other rights.¹ HB 770 affords librarians at the Enoch Pratt Library the same rights that 30,000 other Maryland State employees currently enjoy: The right to make their own decision as to whether they want to organize and form a union. The same right to self-determination has been realized by other librarians around the State. Most recently, the General Assembly passed collective bargaining enabling legislation for Baltimore County Librarians in the 2021 Legislative Session.

In an Executive Order signed early last year, President Biden reaffirmed the position of the United States on collective bargaining rights by stating “*It is also the policy of the United States*

¹ <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

to encourage union organizing and collective bargaining."² We believe that the State of Maryland should follow the lead of the United States and do the same

For freedom and equity, we ask for a favorable report on HB 770.

² <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/22/executive-order-protecting-the-federal-workforce/>