



A Union of Professionals  
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**Written testimony from American Federation of Teachers-Maryland  
Before the House Appropriations Committee  
HB 770 – Enoch Pratt Free Library – Collective Bargaining  
March 1, 2022**

**SUPPORT**

Good afternoon Chair McIntosh and members of the House Appropriations Committee.

AFT-Maryland, the state federation for numerous education and public employee unions in the state and Baltimore region, including the City Union of Baltimore, asks for a favorable report for HB 770, the bill that would close the loophole in city code and charter and state law that keeps city employees at the Enoch Pratt Library from participating in employee organizations for the purposes of collective bargaining, a right enjoyed by nearly every other Baltimore city employee.

The right for public employees to form, participate in, and be covered by a union and its contract with city management is a right enshrined in numerous city and state laws as well as the city charter. Indeed, our city laws (under article 12, Municipal Labor Relations) and charter (under Article VII, § 99) lay out a clear process, and have done so for decades, by which city employees can engage in collective bargaining. However, that process included an unfair loophole by which certain municipal employees, including city employees working at any one of the branches of the Enoch Pratt Library, have been excluded from the rights and protections via collective bargaining afforded every other city worker. Worse, city library employees' rights to participate and be covered by an agreement as a result of collective bargaining is something, according to city code and the city charter, contingent upon the library's governing board **allowing** them collective bargaining rights. By classifying their employees not as "civil service employees," but instead as "special employees," workers at the Enoch Pratt Library are kept from having a seat at the table when it comes to collective bargaining negotiations with the city about pay, benefits, and conditions that govern their employment.

Such a loophole is contrary to our city's principles that say it is the city's employees— not the people who at the time occupy positions of city agency governing boards— that have the right to say whether they want to engage or not engage in collective bargaining with management. Furthermore, because this loophole states that library employees may only be considered civil employees and not special appointees "by appropriate resolution," of the governing board of the library, it is possible that, under current law, a board could also rescind such a resolution at any time for any or no reason, and in doing so, again unfairly deprive employees of their right to collective bargaining.

This bill closes that loophole by simply stating that, for the purposes of collective bargaining, the employees of the Enoch Pratt Library shall not be considered "special employees," but rather "Civil service employees" under the definition stated in Municipal Labor Relations law and in the city charter. In doing so, library employees would join the rest of the city's employees in being allowed to participate in the collective bargaining process and to be covered by a contract that they had a say in creating that governs their conditions of employment. Again, AFT-Maryland calls for a favorable report to HB 770.

Thank you.