



City Union of Baltimore

Local 800, AFT, AFL-CIO

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Written Testimony Submitted by City Union of Baltimore, AFT Local 800
HB 770—Enoch Pratt Free Library—Collective Bargaining
Before the House Appropriations Committee
February 25, 2022
SUPPORT

Good morning Madam Chair and members of the House Appropriations Committee,

My name is Antoinette Ryan-Johnson. I am a Baltimore City employee who works in the Central Records Division of the Baltimore City Police Department and I am also the current President of the City Union of Baltimore (CUB), AFT Local 800. Additionally, I have also been an employee of the Enoch Pratt Free Library. CUB is the certified collective bargaining agent for thousands of Baltimore City professional employees in numerous different city agencies. On behalf of the members of CUB, I ask the committee to issue a favorable report for HB 770, the bill that would close a loophole in the city code and charter and grant our library employees the same rights that nearly every other city worker has— the right to participate in and have a voice in the workplace through unionization.

As a former Enoch Pratt Library employee myself, I know precisely why all city workers— library workers included— should be covered under a collective bargaining agreement. The pandemic has only drawn into sharper focus the need to make sure all city employees have a democratic say in the conditions of their employment. Employees at the Enoch Pratt Library receive the wage increases and benefits that the various unions – CUB, MAPS, AFSCME— get in their negotiations with city management; yet, they do not have a seat at the table in those negotiations processes. Furthermore, while library employees for much of the pandemic worked providing essential services to our residents— anywhere from offering free WiFi hotspots so that people may be able to work remotely, to being the distribution center for rapid tests just as the Omicron variant was taking hold in our state during the holidays— library employees were excluded from collective bargaining conversations that govern workplace safety issues, and excluded from due process and appeal rights afforded to every other city employee in issues of discipline. This is patently unfair.

Members of the committee, our city has for nearly 50 years held as tradition the right of municipal workers to participate in employee organizations that collectively bargain for wages, benefits, and their conditions of employment. And yet a loophole exists in city code and charter and state law whereby management at the library can on their own whim “allow” or “deny” the employees at the Enoch Pratt Library their union rights. In passing this legislation, we affirm the commitment to city employees that they have a right to democracy at their workplace, the right to have a meaningful voice in the conditions of their employment, and that such a right cannot be dependent upon whether management at their workplace “allows” them to be part of a union. The City Union of Baltimore therefore calls for a favorable report to HB 770. Thank you.