



Maryland Defenders Union
Local 423, AFSCME Council 3
marylanddefendersunion@gmail.com



Marci Tarrant Johnson, *President*
Kalia Woods, *Non-Attorney Vice-President*
Shomari Taylor, *Attorney Vice-President*
Henry Druschel, *Recording Secretary*
Cheryl Hughes-Redd, *Secretary-Treasurer*

Sally Larsen, *Attorney Board Member*
Stephanie Joseph, *Attorney Board Member*
Isabel Lipman, *Attorney Board Member*
Afrika Kwanna, *Non-Attorney Board Member*
Casi O'Neill, *Non-Attorney Board Member*
David Pyle, *Trustee*

February 8, 2022

RE: SB 255- State Personnel Management System - Office of the Public Defender –
Placement and Collective Bargaining

Sponsored by: Senator Pamela Beidle

Bill Hearing: Senate Finance Committee
Thursday February 10, 2022

FAVORABLE

Dear Chair Kelley, Vice-Chair Feldman, and Members of the Finance Committee:

My name is Steve Musselman and I am a felony public defender in Hagerstown, MD. I have been with the officer for over twenty years and a practicing attorney for over twenty-nine years. I have been a prosecutor or public defender in Maryland, Louisiana, and Maryland for my whole career. **I am writing in support of SB 255.**

This collective bargaining bill is the final step that I see to protect and successfully represent our clients and meet the mandate of our office of “justice, fairness and dignity.” You have the power to permit us – on the front lines – to do the best for our clients and to do the best that every legislator wants to see.

It is 2022 and I urge you to address the unfairness that public defenders, social workers and core staff employees who do not have the rights of other state workers. State workers make our state better with a “place at the table” and we want to do the same.

Our peer offices have long ago extended these rights to their employees from Los Angeles to Chicago to New York. We wish to join those offices in gaining the right to bargain our wages, working conditions and advocating for our clients. Public Defense can further meet its Constitutional mandates with your support of this bill by advocating for the resources we need, retain high quality staff, and have an open dialogue with the OPD administration on problem solving to better serve our clients.

Furthermore, the attorneys, social workers and core staff are ready to join our 30,000 peer state works with a voice in our future and the ability to equitably and properly foster safety and stability within the agency. The uniqueness of our jobs representing and advocating for those who are voiceless further screams out that we need you to act and give us the protections that should have been extended to us years ago.

I implore this committee to provide a favorable report on SB 255.

Steve Musselman
Assistant Public Defender
Maryland Defenders Union
AFSCME Local 423