



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



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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 Afrika Kwanna and I am an Administrative Aide 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 SB 255, 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. I have worked for the Office of the Public Defender for 5 years and I am always hearing of fellow core staff who have to work second and third jobs just to put food on the table. No one who works for the state of Maryland should be struggling this way.

I currently work a part time job to pay for other bills that my fulltime job can't cover. 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 they were drowning.

I had to keep my youngest daughter home from daycare because the fees increased after during the COVID-19 pandemic. Luckily, I'm able to telework both jobs. However, 90% of my fellow core staff colleagues were not given that option. If my coworkers and I had the same right as any other administrative aide in the state we would be able to advocate for more funding, retain quality staff, and not have to choose between juggling three jobs and never seeing our children or quitting our job to look for something else. We want to be at OPD. We love what we do. We are asking for your support.

Vote YES on SB 255 so the hard working OPD employees can have a voice on the job, and advocate for a better agency.

Afrika Kwanna  
Administrative Aide  
Anne Arundel County- OPD  
AFSCME Local 423