



A Union of Professionals
AFT-Maryland

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**Written Testimony Submitted to the
Maryland Senate Finance Committee
SB 255 - State Personnel Management System - Office of the Public Defender –
Placement and Collective Bargaining
February 10, 2022**

SUPPORT

Chair Kelley and members of the committee. On behalf of the American Federation of Teachers - Maryland (AFT-Maryland), which represents more than 20,000 educators, government, and healthcare workers across Maryland, I urge you to support SB 255 - State Personnel Management System - Office of the Public Defender - Placement and Collective Bargaining.

The Office of the Public Defender (OPD) is one of the largest groups of state employees who do not have the right to collectively bargain over salaries, advancement or working conditions. This hurts OPD workers and the low-income Marylanders who rely on OPD to advocate for them in their times of greatest need. Every day, the employees fight for the civil rights and well-being of Maryland residents who can't afford to pay for legal representation.

This bill will grant OPD workers the long-overdue right to collectively bargain. Employees of OPD chose to embark on this campaign to finally have a seat at the table. Please support their fight for workers' rights and for a strong Office of the Public Defender. We ask this committee for a favorable report on SB 255. Thank you.

Kenya Campbell
President