

Appropriations Committee
Hearing: Tuesday, January 24, 2023, 1pm

Dear Chair Barnes and Members of the Appropriations Committee,

As a Trustee of the Walters Art Museum, I hope you will reject House Bill 116, “Trustees of the Walters Art Gallery - Collective Bargaining,” filed by Delegate Robbyn Lewis.

Recognizing my role as a Trustee—which is focused on governance, not on management of the museum—I nonetheless believe that the museum’s management has been very clear—and very public—in stating that it respects its employees' rights to consider forming a union. Management has been equally clear in calling on those employees who seek to form a union to take some step to do so.

But does the fact that these employees have not taken any actions—from filing a petition, to proposing a third-party election agreement—merit action by the Maryland General Assembly?

It does not. **HB 116 is unnecessary because multiple pathways already exist for employees who wish to form a union to advance the process and get to a vote.**

It furthermore feels like HB 116 is targeting the Walters. **But targeting a single institution with a single bill seems to me like bad public policy.** Not only is it unnecessary, and not only will it run into legal resistance from the Trustees—because the vague language of the bill encroaches on our fiduciary obligations—but it sends a terrible signal to every other organization and every other potential start-up that, if you approach an issue in a manner that a delegate to this body does not like, you too could be the target of a special bill aimed only at you. Surely that is not the message Delegate Lewis intends to send about Maryland as a place in which people should seek to do business. Please, I urge you to reject this bill.

Elke Durden
Vice President, Board of Trustees
The Walters Art Museum