

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

Dear Chair Barnes and Members of the Appropriations Committee,

I am writing to ask you to reject House Bill 116, "Trustees of the Walters Art Gallery - Collective Bargaining," filed by Delegate Robbyn Lewis.

As the chair of the Board's Development Committee, my particular focus is on the potential and likely impact that the overly broad and vague language of HB 116 will have on our work raising private funds to support the Walters' operations now and in the future. **More than 75% of the museum's annual operating budget comes through private philanthropy:** funds raised each year, and funds contributed to our operating endowment.

Yet the bill that Delegate Lewis has put forward redefines the Walters as "a unit and instrumentality of the state and the city," without addressing the future source of the museum's operating funds. **Am I to assume that the 75% of our budget that the Trustees help to raise each year will now be allocated for by the City's and the State's respective budget processes?** Similarly, HB 116 risks jeopardizing the relationship-building work that the museum has done with the wider community, which is so integral to fundraising and audience development.

Many members of the Maryland General Assembly are themselves involved with and privately supportive of any number of nonprofit organizations in this state. Therefore you may know that the fundraising landscape can be competitive—and that an organization's clarity of mission and operating structure is essential to the process of securing major gifts. **No donor wants to give to an entity that may not use their funds as intended, or one that has its funds seized by the government.**

On the subject of labor relations, HB 116 is not necessary. Nothing is standing in the way of the museum's employees taking any number of different procedural steps to get to a vote on whether to form a union. But it would be both upsetting and deeply ironic if, in passing Delegate Lewis' bill, the General Assembly ends up demolishing the very jobs it is aiming to help through this odd piece of legislation that would gut the private sector's support for the museum, which would have significant ramifications for its budget—and its employees.

Please reconsider advancing this bill.

Betsey L. B. Todd, Chair, Development Committee  
Board of Trustees, The Walters Art Museum