

## **HB0116**

Appropriations Committee

Favorable, Written Testimony by **Ruby Waldo**  
Walters Workers United, AFSCME Community Support

Having grown up in Baltimore, I've experienced the museum's gravitational pull nearly all my life. The Walters is a vital resource in Baltimore City. It's a place for practicing close attention and experiencing wonder. I can only imagine what such a place might feel like if its workers were treated with compassion and dignity. As a former employee, I felt passionate about unionizing, when I thought about the relationships that me and my coworkers had built with youth and families over the years. For five years, I felt devoted to the dependable programming that had become a weekend ritual for many families across the city. But, it is incredibly difficult to do this work when the atmosphere is confusing and precarious, and at times, scary. At the end of last summer, I stepped away from the museum exhausted from the utter lack of honest communication, fair compensation, and respect for workers.

The WWU campaign is centered around the need for pay equity, job security, increased health and safety, and having a voice in the making of decisions that directly affect workers. It has been well over a year since that supermajority of workers signed union cards and sought recognition and yet this remains an urgent matter. Time and time again, workers have tried to call upon leadership but repeated requests for conversation have been denied. Museum management has refused to even meet with workers to discuss a process to move forward cooperatively. Workers came together to form a union because they want to uplift their collective voices and make the Walters a better place. Because of museum leadership's opposition to a fair union election, workers need this state legislation to ensure collective bargaining rights.