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BILL NO.: **HB 116**

TITLE: Trustees of the Walters Art Gallery - Collective Bargaining

SPONSOR: Delegate R. Lewis

COMMITTEE: Appropriations

POSITION: **SUPPORT**

DATE: January 24, 2023

Baltimore County **SUPPORTS** House Bill 116 – Trustees of the Walters Art Gallery - Collective Bargaining. This legislation empowers employees of the Walters Art Gallery to establish a collective bargaining unit.

The Walters Art Gallery has long been an institution for residents throughout the Baltimore region and the State of Maryland. Each and every employee shares the solemn responsibility to preserve the culture and legacy of history’s venerated artists and take great care to maintain the quality of their works. This legislation serves as a milestone for those employees, and recognizes the critical role they play in this process. While there have been discussions between Walters Workers United (WWU) and management since 2020, it is clear that a legislative solution is necessary to bring the parties to the table to move this important process forward.

Unions are the backbone of a strong middle class and Baltimore County fully supports the right of employees to collectively bargain. As costs of living continue to rise sharply, it has never been more critical to ensure that working families are empowered to advocate for their needs with one voice. Since taking office, Baltimore County Executive Johnny Olszewski has supported collective bargaining rights for local library employees, community college employees, and Maryland Transit Administration staff. This is because when public institutions have a mechanism that fosters communication between employees and management, those institutions run more efficiently, effectively, and support their dedicated workers.

Accordingly, Baltimore County requests a **FAVORABLE** report on HB 116. For more information, please contact Jenn Aiosa, Director of Government Affairs at jaiosa@baltimorecountymd.gov.