

12/26/22

I'm writing to express my support, as a charter school teacher, for extending collective bargaining rights to all public library workers in Maryland.

As a fellow education worker without a union to represent my interests, I understand on a personal level just how badly library workers in Maryland need collective bargaining rights. Public school teachers, and many other library workers across the country, won collective bargaining rights decades ago. There is no excuse to force library workers into jumping through local hoops every time they want to even decide if they want a union to represent them.

For all the importance of maintaining libraries and the books and resources in them, library workers receive very little institutional support. Now more than ever their wages don't keep pace with inflation, while new duties are added to their job description at the drop of a pin (distributing Covid tests, acting as tech tutors and troubleshooters for online learning, and de-escalating anti-LGBTQ+ demonstrations, to name a few).

Like others in the caring professions, library workers experience stress and trauma when patrons bring their own pain through library doors.¹ And like other care workers, they have felt unprecedented levels of job burnout in the years since Covid-19.² The best way to combat this? Make it easy to unionize. Unionization breaks the social isolation that characterizes burnout. Having a say in one's schedule, workload, assignments, pay, and benefits, supported by a collective bargaining agreement and a clear grievance process, fosters the sense of control and autonomy that a healthy worker needs.³

As a charter school worker, I deal with many of the same issues library workers do. I believe that an injury to one is an injury to all, so even though I do not work in public libraries, I feel their pain and strongly urge for collective bargaining rights to be extended to ALL public library workers in Maryland.

Sincerely,
Chase Zaslannya

¹ Albanese, Andrew. "Groundbreaking Study Explores Trauma, Stress in Frontline Library Workers." Publishers Weekly. <https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/industry-news/libraries/article/89798-groundbreaking-new-study-explores-trauma-stress-in-frontline-library-workers.html>. July 07, 2022. Accessed Dec 14, 2022.

² Abramson, Ashley. "Burnout and stress are everywhere." American Psychological Association. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/burnout/art-20046642>. January 1, 2022. Accessed Dec 14, 2022.

³ "Job burnout: How to spot it and take action." Mayo Clinic Staff. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/burnout/art-20046642>. Accessed Dec 14, 2022.