

**Testimony for the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee**

**Monday, February 20th, 2023**

**SB 491 – Charles County Board of Education - School Bus Contractor Employees -  
Negotiations**

**FAVORABLE**

Greetings Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and committee members,

My name is Shirley Washington. I have worked in Charles County as a Professional Certified School Bus Driver for 33 years. I am now into retirement years with very little money in my retirement plan less than \$25,000 4 years ago. And after penalties and taxes this equals to less than the total amount of contributions per year. How can this be? How can I even consider the possibility of retirement? I am still living in poverty without any hope of change.

I drive a school bus like other drivers in Charles County and meet all necessary requirements. I obtain a certified driver's license and DOT certifications. I have completed all in-services, State, and Federal requirements, classes, and obtained great driving evaluations to receive on average of 25 - 82 cents most of the time less than 82 cents and was told by the Transportation Dept. that they will fight hard to get that for us.

It is for these reasons, unfair working environment / conditions, unaffordable health insurance with high emergency room copay, doctors office visits, and specialist copays. Yes, yes, that has driven myself and others to seek help. We are hoping you hear our cry, feel our pain, and be willing to do the right thing and bring us relief.

There are many Drivers and Attendants under these same conditions. We decided to seek (ATU) Amalgamated Transit Union Local 689 as our sole representative to bargain and negotiate on the behalf of contracted Drivers and Attendants for better wages, benefits, and retirement. Please free us from these unfair and unethical conditions.

This is why I am in support of Senate Bill SB0491.

Thank you,

Shirley Washington