

Maryland General Assembly Senate Finance Committee

Hearing: Thursday, February 16, 2023, 1:00 p.m.

Dear Madam Chair Griffith and Members of the Finance Committee:

As a Trustee of the Walters Art Museum, I hope you will reject Senate Bill 284, "Trustees of the Walters Art Gallery - Collective Bargaining," filed by Senator Jill P. Carter.

Recognizing my role as a Trustee—which is focused on governance, not on management of the museum—I nonetheless believe that the museum's management has been very clear—and very public—in stating that it respects its employees' rights to consider forming a union.

Recently, a group of employees who seek to form a union have presented management with a proposed voluntary recognition agreement, to which the museum's management has responded—and the parties are set to meet soon.

But even had this not happened, SB 284 is **unnecessary because multiple pathways already exist for employees who wish to form a union to advance the process and get to a vote without the interference of this legislation.**

It furthermore feels like SB 284 is targeting the Walters. **But targeting a single institution with a single bill seems to me like bad public policy.** Not only is it unnecessary, and not only will it run into legal resistance from the Trustees—because the vague language of the bill encroaches on our fiduciary obligations—but it sends a terrible signal to every other organization and every other potential start-up that, if you approach an issue in a manner that a delegate to this body does not like, you too could be the target of a special bill aimed only at you. Surely that is not the message Senator Carter and the Finance Committee intends to send about Maryland as a place in which people should seek to do business. Please, I urge you to reject this bill.

Elke Durden
Vice President
Board of Trustees, The Walters Art Museum