



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony of Senator Jill P. Carter
In Favor of Senate Bill 284
Trustees of the Walters Art Gallery - Collective Bargaining
Before the Senate Finance Committee
On February 16, 2023**

Chair Griffith, Vice Chair Klausmeier, and Members of the Committee

SB284 amends Baltimore City's Public Local Laws to provide collective bargaining rights to the workers of Walters Art Gallery and delegate authority to administer and enforce those rights to the City of Baltimore.

Walters' workers have been organizing since 2021 to fight for a stronger voice on the job. They support all aspects of the museum's operations, from providing an enriching visitor experience and educational programming to the community; to curating and conserving the art; conducting research; running the gift shop and providing building services and security. They are organizing to have a safe and healthy workplace, pay equity, benefits for part-time employees, professional developments, and job security. Simply, they're asking to be respected, protected, and acknowledged like every other state worker.

The Walters Art Gallery was created by City ordinance and an act of the General Assembly in 1933, when Henry Walters left his gallery and collection to the City of Baltimore. While a unique institution, it is a public entity that is under the Maryland Public Information Act. City funds are used to help pay employee salaries and benefits and the institution is under oversight of the Mayor and City Council. Because

there is joint authority over the Walters between the State and the City, a gap exists in Maryland labor law to grant collective bargaining rights to these employees.

On January 13, 2023, the Circuit Court for Baltimore City agreed with Walters Workers United (Walters Workers United, Council 67, AFCME, AFL-CIO, *et. al* vs. Trustees of the Walters rt Gallery) and ruled that the Walters is a public institution and must comply with the Maryland Public Information Act like all other Maryland public entities. No private museums in Maryland are subject to the MPIA.

Like legislation passed by the General Assembly for the Baltimore City Police Department in 1982, and the Baltimore County Public Library system in 2021, state legislation is needed to create collective bargaining rights for these public employees and to designate under which jurisdiction those collective bargaining rights exist.

Before you is testimony from Mayor Brandon Scott signally his support of the this legislation. The Mayor has further included it on his list of priorities for the 2023 session.

I respectfully request a favorable report of SB284, sending a clear message to our frontline workers that their voice matters and is being heard.

Sincerely,



Jill P. Carter