

Written Testimony Submitted for the Senate Finance Committee
Testimony of Evangelina Hakes
SB 591 –The Library Workers Empowerment Act
February 29th, 2024

SUPPORT

Dear Chair Beidle, Vice-Chair Klausmeier, and Members of the Senate Finance:

My name is Evangelina Hakes, and I am a Library Associate at the Mountain Road branch of the Anne Arundel County Public Library System. We are facing a number of challenges here in AACPL. I currently comfortably live on my wages, but it's because I live at home with my parents. I know that in the current housing market, I would probably be in a much more precarious position if I did not. I know coworkers that make more than me and still have to do things like work extra hours on Sunday if certain financial burdens come up. We do essential work in our communities, and none of us should feel like we're living paycheck to paycheck, or only able to survive by living with family.

I like my branch, and we are lucky to have good leadership. But that leadership can always change, and the good leadership we have is often limited in what it can advocate for at an institutional level. There is the sense that the decisions being made by executive leadership aren't always informed by branch level experience, and that there are decisions being made that don't consider how policies and procedures have to be carried out. As for training, overall, there is a sense that there is not a solid, consistent approach to training for different positions which can make it harder to know what you need to know and feel supported in your role.

When it comes to decisions that are going to impact staff on a branch level, our voices as branch staff need to be heard and respected, and need to be included as part of decisions that will impact our work, our services, and our patrons. Many of our issues come from feeling like there is a disconnect between who's making decisions and who has to carry them out- decisions about library services and policies should be informed by those on the ground. I think collective bargaining is the best way to accomplish this. By giving us a direct path to negotiate with management, we'll be able to weigh in on these critical decisions that impact both us as staff and the communities and patrons we serve every day. This bill is critical to the future of our system, and to the future of libraries in the state of Maryland as a whole as well. We are relying on you, so that our communities can continue to rely on us. Please support SB 591, the Library Workers Empowerment Act.

Evangelina Hakes
Library Associate
Anne Arundel County Public Library