

Written Testimony Submitted for the House Appropriations Committee
Testimony of Kristy Gordon
SB 591 –The Library Workers Empowerment Act
February 29th, 2024

SUPPORT

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

My name is Kristy Gordon, and I am a Children's Instructor & Research Specialist with Howard County Library System, where I have worked for the past 23 years. Children's instructors receive the same treatment as adult instructors, but the workload is not always equitable. Children's staff present far more classes in the branch and are required to do more outreach in the community. Our children's department at Glenwood has unique areas that require additional upkeep that other branches do not. Retention in these critical positions is low.

In my 12 years at Glenwood, we have lost three young adult specialists, three children's supervisors, four children's instructors, one branch manager, three assistant branch managers, two adult instructors, one customer service supervisor and countless customer service specialists. That's an average turnover of about 1.5 people a year. Workplace decisions are made top-down. New administrators are not given the training and resources necessary for understanding how the branches run day-to-day. Decisions are made that staff cannot accommodate due to work hours, location in the county, outstanding responsibilities, or classes.

Collective bargaining will hopefully give us the ability to turn things around. We're grateful to have collective bargaining rights for library workers here in Howard County, and I firmly believe it is right that all library workers across the state of Maryland have collective bargaining rights as well. Please pass SB 591, the Library Workers Empowerment Act, and grant us a unified process that will allow us to bargain.

Kristy Gordon
Children's Instructor and Research Specialist
HCLS