

Testimony from Bridget Fitzgerald
To House Appropriations Committee
Regarding HB 1071
House Appropriations Committee

Greetings members of the House Appropriations Committee, My name is Bridget Fitzgerald. I am an organizer with the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM). I would like to thank you for considering this legislation and extend special appreciation to Delegate Cathi Forbes, for supporting Baltimore County Public Library (BCPL) workers since their first step down this path.

In 2021, the General Assembly passed enabling legislation for the non-supervisory staff of the Baltimore County Public Library to form a union and collectively bargain, should that have been something they chose to do. Later that year, BCPL non-supervisory staff did in fact organize and vote in the IAM as their representative for collective bargaining.

Since then, other collective bargaining legislation has passed including:

- State Personnel – Collective Bargaining – Supervisory Employees legislation (HB 260/SB192 in 2024 session) enables supervisory employees in Maryland to unionize and collectively bargain, if they so choose.
- Maryland Public Employee Relations Act – creates a more unified, efficient process to public employee relations across the state.
- Library Workers Empowerment Act (LWEA) – enables county public library non-supervisory **and** supervisory employees to unionize for collectively bargaining rights counties that were not unionized.

Whether the intent was to streamline the process, provide better coordination across the public sector or enable segments of Maryland's public sector employees to unionize, each law signaled an expansion of collective bargaining rights in the state of Maryland.

In 2024, HB260/SB192 forged a pathway for supervisory employees in Maryland's public sector to unionize and collectively bargain. Supervisors in the education system are organizing into Administrative & Supervisory (A&S) units with the Maryland State Education Association. In fact, on January 29, 2025, MSEA announced they were welcoming their tenth A&S unit to their organization. Similar situations exist with the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) who are organizing supervisors into "S-Units" within Maryland's public sector.

The LWEA was a comprehensive piece of legislation that applied to unorganized library system in Maryland. It enabled **both non-supervisory and supervisory employees** to unionize into **two separate units**. However, LWEA did not step back and provide for supervisory units to be formed in Baltimore, because BCPL was not an "unorganized" library system. This bill, SB0914, will provide the enabling rights to supervisors, matching the other county library systems in Maryland, **without** altering the unionizing and collective bargaining processes established in

BCPL's 2021 law. Essentially, this is the best of both worlds – providing enabling rights to supervisory employees without disrupting the process in the “BCPL Law” that has proven to work for management and staff alike.

The current law affecting BCPL employees does not apply to supervisors, which is defined as employees with the authority to hire, fire, render discipline, direct work, resolve grievances, award employees, among other responsibilities above a routine nature. These are employees who do not rise to the level of management. They don't have authority outside the branches in which they work.

This bill will **not** apply to management employees, which according to the both the current law and HB 1071, are employees who formulate policy, have budgetary oversight, enforce employee relations, as well as the inclusive supervisory responsibilities.

I understand that some who operate outside the union representation world may not understand the need for two units or comprehend how they can exist side-by-side. The separation by unit is intended to avoid conflicts-of-interest, while respecting the workers' rights to organize with a union of their choosing. Unit representatives, commonly known as Stewards, are elected from within the unit to represent **only** those in the described unit. This provides represented employees with a steward who understands the applicable contract and the workplace on a similar level (non-supervisory level or supervisory level). To be more precise, only non-supervisory stewards would represent non-supervisory employees and only supervisory stewards would represent supervisory employees. This scenario applies whether the individual units are represented by the same union, or different ones, as the choice of union is up to the employees in the unit.

The dual unit scenario has long existed within the PG County library system. These library system employees have been unionized since the 1980's, so they were also excluded from LWEA. If you examine the contract between the PG library system and McGeo Union, you will find they have two units identified in their contract. Based on the job classifications listed, the units are divided by supervisory and non-supervisory status. For decades these independent units have coexisted in the library, each forging their own relationship with management, but all working together to provide a stellar library system to county residents.

While it is true that negotiations to pass BCPL's 2021 law did not seek to include supervisory staff, we do not live in a vacuum. As the “norms” change it's only natural for people to want to duplicate processes that will improve their lives. In Baltimore, the non-supervisory employees have unionized to negotiate their wages, hours and working conditions. The labor-management cooperative relationship has provided better communication and transparency. Providing a pathway for the supervisory employees in BCPL to achieve the same, should they so choose, will bring BCPL in line with other county library “norms” to the benefit of the employees and the public who utilize the library's services. For this reason, I request you vote favorable on HB 1071

Thank you.