

**Written Testimony Submitted by
Shelly McCully, President,
Maryland School for the Deaf Faculty and Staff Union (AFT Local 4828)
to the Maryland House Appropriations Committee
HB 159
Arbitration Reform for State Employees Act of 2025
February 4, 2025
SUPPORT**

Good afternoon, Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Chang, and members of the House Appropriations Committee. My name is Shelly McCully, and I am a long time state employee and teacher at the Maryland School for the Deaf at the Columbia Campus. I am also the president of the Maryland School for the Deaf Faculty and Staff Union, representing the hundreds of teachers, professionals, aides, and nurses who work for this state agency at both the Columbia and Frederick Campuses. On behalf of these workers we call for a favorable report to HB 159, the bill that would ensure a fair bargaining process in contract negotiations between the Governor and its state workforce.

Our union has only been negotiating a contract with the administration for two years– we were certified as a union after the legislature gave us this right in 2020. And while we do enjoy an amicable and professional relationship with the administration, we do think this legislation would help create an even fairer bargaining process through which bargaining disputes might be resolved. But even more, even by offering the potential for either side to request an arbitrator whose decision regarding an impasse at bargaining will further advance and ensure that each side will be working in good faith to come to a resolution at the bargaining table.

I must note that here in Maryland, every other local k12 public school system offers binding arbitration in negotiations with its teachers union, except for us here at Maryland school for the Deaf. This again puts our school at a disadvantage when it comes to getting equal rights to teachers and staff at our school– while the teachers have recourse to an objective, third party judge to look at the contract proposals from labor and management’s side to determine which proposal is fair, teachers and staff at Maryland School for the Deaf don’t have that same access or level of fairness when it comes to bargaining our contracts. Let us correct this error and bring a level of objectivity and fairness to the collective bargaining system to the rest of state employees by passing HB 159.