

Dear members of the Senate Finance Committee,

Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to consider SB 914, Baltimore County Public Library – Collective Bargaining – Supervisory Employees. And thank you to Senator Hettleman for sponsoring this important legislation.

My name is Heather Faust, and I'm a Library Supervisor with Baltimore County Public Library. When legislation was passed in 2021 initially permitting non-supervisory Baltimore County Public Library employees to unionize, I was still a non-supervisory employee. I was proud and excited to join the new BCPL union, and I even volunteered to serve as a steward at the Lansdowne Branch where I have worked since 2017.

When the opportunity for promotion to my current position suddenly presented itself in the summer of 2022, the biggest drawback I felt, and something that almost caused me not to apply for the position, was that if I were to be promoted to Library Supervisor I would have to leave the union. I thought long and hard about this before deciding to apply, eventually concluding that, for me, management and unions are not mutually exclusive, and that being a manager who understands how unions work and recognizes their benefit could only be a good thing.

You may hear those opposed to this legislation claim that extending collective bargaining rights to managers and supervisors at BCPL is unprecedented and will lead to catastrophe. They may say something like, "If we extend bargaining rights to library managers and supervisors in Baltimore County then everyone else will want those same rights, and it will be unsupportable."

On the contrary, many other managers and supervisors both in Baltimore County and throughout the state of Maryland already have such collective bargaining rights! I included a few supporting links below that I found in only a very quick and cursory search online. For example:

- Just last spring, Governor Moore signed not only HB 609/SB 591, the Library Workers Empowerment Act, which included collective bargaining rights for supervisory employees of all other Maryland public library systems currently without a union, but also HB 260/SB 192, which allowed over 5,000 supervisors working for the state of Maryland to collectively bargain.¹ Those state supervisors now have their own supervisory unit within the Maryland Classified Employees Association (MCEA)²
- Since 1994 Baltimore County Public Schools have had the Council of Administrative & Supervisory Employees (CASE) as their designated bargaining unit for those supervisory personnel whose job requires them to be state certified.³
- In addition, the BCPS Organization of Professional Employees (BCPSOPE) represents professional, technical, and supervisory positions that do not require state certification.⁴
- Both the Baltimore City and Baltimore County Police Departments include employees up through the rank of Lieutenant in their collective bargaining units.⁵
- Prince George's County Library has had both non-supervisory and supervisory units in their union for many years.

In other words, this is certainly not a new concept and many examples of successful, clearly and appropriately structured collective bargaining by managers and supervisors already exist in Maryland. The fact that SB 914

provides for two separate bargaining units removes the issue of conflict of interest, and with the two units I expect the roles and responsibilities of each will be defined even more clearly than they are now.

When I listened to opposing testimony on SB 914's sister bill, HB 1071, I was particularly struck by the repeated comments about how closely BCPL administration and the BCPL union have worked together to successfully negotiate four contracts. I realized again just how much managers and supervisors like me who are **not** "confidential employees,"⁶ and who do **not** take part in setting library policy, are left out of that process under the current system.

The current view seems to be that as a supervisor my viewpoint must necessarily be aligned more with the institution than with the staff I supervise or even with my fellow supervisors. Yet as a supervisor on the branch level, not only am I not part of the negotiation process, I cannot even talk to anyone **about** the process. I have no outlet to ask any questions about what's being negotiated, offer my support (or opposition) at any point in the process, or give any input about how any part of the negotiations might affect my staff or my branch, let alone my own workload or experience as a supervisor.

This is very isolating. And unfortunately, especially for those managers and supervisors who were not previously familiar with unions, the current structure that excludes us from the collective bargaining process seems to have created an unnecessary estrangement between managers and staff by drawing an artificial – but very visible – "us vs them" line between us.

In fact, managers and supervisors at BCPL often have much in common with the staff we supervise. We face many of the same challenges and concerns, we share many of the same goals, and we too deserve a process whereby we can advocate for improvements to our own working conditions as well as those of our staff, conditions which are really interrelated. This legislation clearly spells out the roles and expectations of the two bargaining units (supervisory and non-supervisory), assisting in clearer communication and an improved working relationship between all parties.

SB 914 brings BCPL's collective bargaining structure in line with last year's Library Workers Empowerment Act, and indeed with all the other library systems in Maryland, while retaining all the processes of the 2021 BCPL law. The legislation has been carefully crafted to remove the possibility of conflict of interest, in keeping with other supervisory collective bargaining units already in existence throughout the state.

I hope you will support SB 914 and encourage your colleagues to do likewise, and I thank you again for your time and consideration.

¹ <https://afscmemd.org/press-room/gov-moore-signs-bill-giving-5000-state-supervisors-ability>

² <https://mcea-su.md.aft.org/>

³ <https://case-bcps.org/>

⁴ <https://bcpsope.org/>

⁵ <https://fop3.org/>

⁶ <https://koffassociates.com/news-and-notes/confidential-employee-designation/>