

Testimony from Bridget Fitzgerald  
To Baltimore County Delegation  
Regarding HB 1071  
Baltimore County Delegation Hearing February 21, 2025

Greetings members of the Baltimore County Delegation, 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 and Senator Shelly Hettleman, both of whom have stood by Baltimore County library workers since their first step down this path.

In 2021, this delegation supported enabling legislation for the non-supervisory staff of the Baltimore County Public Library (BCPL) 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 the State Personnel – Collective Bargaining – Supervisory Employees legislation, Maryland Public Employee Relations Act and the Library Workers Empowerment Act (LWEA), to name a few. 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 signals an expansion of collective bargaining rights for public sector employees in the state of Maryland.

The LWEA was a comprehensive piece of legislation that helped unorganized library systems 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, HB1071, will provide the enabling rights to supervisors, matching the other counties in Maryland, **without** altering the unionizing and collective bargaining processes established in BCPL’s 2021 law. Essentially, this is the best of both worlds – provides enabling rights to employees without disrupting to a process that has proven to work for management and staff alike.

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 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.

There are examples of this multi-unit relationship existing throughout the Labor world. In the Federal Sector, the units are referred to as professionals and non-professionals. The two units are just as likely to be represented by the same union, as not, even in the same agency. For example, within the US Forest Service, the IAM represents professionals working on some forests, non-professionals on others, and some forests where we represent both units. Similar situations exist here in the state of Maryland, within the public sector. For example, within the education system, Maryland State Education Association (MSEA) has Administrative and Supervisory units (A&S). On January 29, 2025, MSEA announced they were welcoming their tenth A&S unit to their organization. Similar situations exist within American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME). They are organizing supervisors into "S-Units" within various areas of the public sector.

Finally, 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.

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 will be beneficial for the employees and the public who utilize the library's services. For this reason, I request you vote favorable on HB107.

Thank you.