



## TESTIMONY

**COMMITTEE:** House Government, Labor, and Elections

**DATE:** March 3, 2026

**POSITION:** Unfavorable

**BILL:** HB 831

The Maryland Municipal League (MML) opposes House Bill 831 - Collective Bargaining - Local Government Employees and Public Employee Relations Act.

Currently about 15 municipal governments allow some employees to collectively bargain but the employer has discretion to craft the parameters around the collective bargaining process. For instance, the municipal government may select the category of employee eligible (ex. police, fire, public works, trades), which aspects of a compensation package may be collectively bargained, and whether there is binding arbitration. This flexibility is critical as it allows the local government to determine the impact on its workforce and governmental operations.

While HB 831 does not mandate that local government employees collectively bargain, it does provide the opportunity to all 32,000 municipal employees while currently it is provided at the employer's choice. Not all employees will take advantage of this new option, but many will. Any increase in the number of employees that collectively bargain will result in increased costs to that government as employees who collectively bargain typically see higher salaries and benefits. Some municipal governments are better situated to absorb such a cost increase while others are not.

Additionally, there will be a significant additional administrative burden should all municipal employees choose to collectively bargain. Municipal governments are somewhat unique as employers in that they have employees engage in distinct categories of work. This would result in municipal governments negotiating separately with several unions and then managing several unique and nuanced contracts, one for each category of employees. Municipal governments that negotiate and manage multiple contracts will have increased administrative requirements and potentially stiff penalties for non-compliance with those contracts.

For these reasons, the League respectfully requests the committee provide HB 831 with an unfavorable report.

For more information relating to this piece of testimony, please contact:

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*Municipalities in Maryland employ 32,000 workers and provide \$5.2 billion in employee compensation.*