

RE: HB1492 - Collective Bargaining - Public Employees - Revocation of Certification and School and Library Employees' Right to Strike

Position: **FAVORABLE**

House Government, Labor, and Elections Committee

Hearing Date: Wednesday, March 11, 2026

Madame Chair and Members of the Government, Labor, and Elections Committee,

My name is Nicole Dvorak, I'm a former Baltimore County Public Library Union Executive Board Member (IAMAW LL 4538) and I was on the first union contract negotiating team in 2022 on behalf of the hundreds of non-supervisory staff at BCPL.

In contract negotiations we were consistently treated as if we didn't deserve basic dignity and human rights in the workplace. As an example, we asked that contract language include that there be a chair available for staff to sit in at the front desks across the library system. Pretty basic, right? Management said NO. We asked that language in our contract include that staff be REQUIRED to have anti-discrimination training. Management said NO. Every day in negotiations was more of the same from management: they weren't negotiating, they were just sending back counter-offers where they struck through almost everything we proposed. Their counter-offers were just "no." They pretended that they never had any time to meet, when the reality was that they just didn't want to meet at all, so every year they drag out negotiations and disrespect staff because that suits them. Does that suit you?

The situation is terrible, and it's actually much worse than that: Library Administrators across the state are pointedly targeting staff union organizers to harass them and threaten to fire them simply for trying to unionize or trying to get a first contract. And what's worse than all of that is that the majority of elected officials aren't doing anything to stop this abuse, which means they are complicit. Public Library officials across Maryland continue to use millions of dollars in public funds (and potentially private and/or Foundation funds) to hire expensive law firms to go beat up the public staff who are trying to find your youngest constituents a book about trees after we've helped other patrons apply for a new job. The truth is that beating up public library workers and public workers in general suits the majority of elected officials here, too.

In Anne Arundel County, the Library Board & CEO spent almost \$170,000 in less than a year on a union-busting law firm to "negotiate" with the union, including Library Management fighting AGAINST better anti-discrimination protections for staff. The Charles County Library Board and CEO authorized up to \$250,000 to be spent on a union-busting law firm, while the Charles County library union contract would cover approximately 57 employees. This means Charles County Library Management is choosing to spend over \$4000 per employee on union-busting. The Baltimore County library system abruptly fired 14 librarians and escorted them out with their items in a trash bag. Howard County Library system negotiated a wage increase with the union and then immediately renegeed. It's so out of hand because no one who the Library Admins respect or answer to is telling them to do it any differently than that.

We will not be silent about this gross abuse from public officials to beat up and undermine public sector work and workers. Because abuse and exploitation are the operational models of every single public library system AND every single public school system in the state of Maryland, the very least you can do is give us all the Right to Strike by passing HB1492. Apparently most public officials don't actually think we're that valuable to begin with (see above), so you won't miss us when we walk out.

Thank you,

Nicole Dvorak

Former Union Executive Board Member, Baltimore County Public Library Union,
IAMAW LL 4538