
ROBERT G. CASSILLY
Harford County Executive



ROBERT S. McCORD
Director of Administration

February 27, 2026

The Honorable Melissa Wells
Chair, House Government, Labor, and Elections Committee
145 Lowe House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Opposition to House Bill 831 – Collective Bargaining – Local Government Employees and
Public Employee Relations Act

Dear Chairwomen Wells and Committee Members,

On behalf of the citizens of Harford County, I respectfully submit this letter in opposition to House Bill 831.

HB 831 would significantly alter the relationship between local governments and their employees by mandating that counties and municipalities operate under a statewide collective bargaining framework. While labor-management relationships are an important component of public service delivery, this legislation represents a substantial state intrusion into matters that have historically been governed locally.

Local governments operate under diverse charters, fiscal structures, and workforce needs. Harford County, like many jurisdictions, has established personnel systems, compensation structures, and administrative procedures that reflect local priorities and budgetary realities. HB 831 would replace that flexibility with a statewide system, including prescribed bargaining procedures and potential binding arbitration mechanisms, regardless of local governance structure or fiscal condition.

One of the most significant concerns is the fiscal impact. Mandatory collective bargaining and binding impasse procedures could result in financial obligations that extend beyond available revenues or long-term fiscal planning. Counties are required by law to adopt balanced budgets. Any statutory framework that shifts financial decision-making authority or compels expenditures through arbitration risks undermining local budget discipline and taxpayer accountability.

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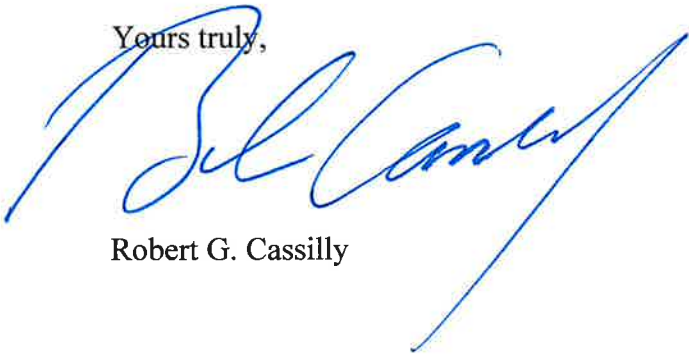
Additionally, the bill diminishes the authority of locally elected officials to manage the workforce in a manner consistent with community needs. Decisions related to staffing levels, compensation, benefits, and workplace policies must remain within the discretion of those directly accountable to local voters. A one-size-fits-all state mandate does not account for differences in population size, service delivery models, or fiscal capacity among Maryland's counties.

Harford County supports constructive engagement with its employees and recognizes the value of open communication and fair workplace policies. However, imposing a mandatory statewide collective bargaining regime removes essential local discretion and may create long-term fiscal and operational constraints.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge an unfavorable report on House Bill 831.

Thank you.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Bob Cassilly", with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Robert G. Cassilly