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District 4

House Government, Labor, and Elections Committee
Maryland General Assembly

3/9/2026
Subj: Regarding HB 1492

Dear Chair Wells, Vice Chair Kerr, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for taking time to consider this bill, HB 1492 – Collective Bargaining – Public Employees – Revocation of Certification for School and Library Employees. Additionally, thank you Delegate Ebersole for being this bill's sponsor, and Delegates Wells, Fair, Lehman, Ruth, Terrasa, and Solomon for being co-sponsors.

My name is Kevin Gallagher, and I am an organizer for The International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM Union), District 4, and a member of IAM Local 4538. I am also an alumnus of Baltimore City Public Schools, the son of a Baltimore County Public Library Worker, and the grandson of public-school teachers. I have witness firsthand the devotion, dedication, and struggles of some of the most important public servants in our society. I also have experienced and benefited from the leverage and power that the right to strike, or even the right to threaten to strike, gives workers.

I started my journey in the labor movement as a worker at the Apple Store in Towson, Maryland, where my coworkers and I made history when we won our election and were certified as the first unionized Apple Store in the United States. Our battle to bargain our first contract was hard fought, Apple had trillions of dollars and an army of lawyers in their corner. As a member of our bargaining committee, I found that we needed every tool in tactic we could conceive of to win a contract that the workers at Apple Towson deserved.

After nearly two years of negotiations, we had only a few items left on the table, including two of the most important issues to our members. The first, as many of you can image, was wages. Apple had plenty of money to spare, and we believed we were worth more than they were willing to pay us. The other issue was a little less straight forward, a proposal from Apple that would make major changes to policies involving scheduling and availability. Their proposed policy would have led to 18 of our coworkers being terminated for not meeting minimum availability requirements, requirements these workers once met before the mall permanently shortened its hours of operations after the Covid-19 Pandemic have forever reshaped the retail industry. All 18 of these workers worked part time at Apple, some for as many as 12 years, and all 18 worked another full-time job. 17 of the 18 workers were African American, and 12 were women.

Apple made it clear that they were unwilling to compromise, and our members had to be prepared to stand up and fight for the livelihoods of those 18 workers. In anticipation of a last, best, and final offer from the company, we

held a Strike Authorization vote ahead of our next round of negotiations, which passed nearly unanimously. It is important to note that this vote was not to strike, it was a vote to authorize preparations for a strike. To our surprise, at the next bargaining session Apple suddenly moved on their position, and we reached a compromise that allowed them to enact their policy while also protecting the jobs of all 18 workers. I believe this compromise would not have been reached without the power and leverage that merely the threat of a strike gave us. I also believe that it was our ability to threaten a strike that allowed us to advert one down the road.

House Bill 1492 aims to give teachers and library workers the tools they need to fight for contracts that give the workers, our students, and our community members what they deserve. When public servants like teachers go on strike, it's not just for better wages or benefits. It's often for smaller class sizes, more resources for vulnerable students, and for the funding that special education departments so desperately need.

A vote to give teachers and library workers the right to strike is not a vote for those workers to go on strike. In fact, over the last 20 years 75% of all teacher strikes were in states where teachers did not have the right to. A vote to give our teachers and library workers the right to strike is a vote to give them the leverage they need to better their workplaces and hopefully avoid the need to strike altogether.

I am hope that you will support HB 1492 and encourage your collogues to join you in a favorable vote, giving these valuable public servants the tools they need to advocate for themselves and for our communities.

Sincerely,

Kevin Gallagher

Organizer, IAM Union District 4