



BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF
WASHINGTON COUNTY, MARYLAND

February 24, 2026

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

RE: Opposition to House Bill 0831—Collective Bargaining – Local Government Employees and Public Employee Relations Act

Dear Chairwoman Wells:

The Board of County Commissioners of Washington County (the “Board”) unanimously opposes the passage of House Bill 0831 and its contemplated expansion of the Maryland Public Employee Relations Act to county and municipal employers and employees.

This bill constitutes a drastic and extreme disruption in local government employer and employee procedures. As the terms are defined in HB 0831, at least 90% of local government employees, including those serving on quasi-governmental entities would be affected by this bill. If all public local employees (as that term is defined in HB 0831) were permitted to enter into collective bargaining agreements (“CBAs”), myriad issues would arise that would be detrimental to both the employees and the employers. First, unionization would increase costs to the employer by requiring that additional time and energy be directed toward the negotiation of CBAs. Whereas some local governments may possess ample resources to hire labor counsel to handle these negotiations, not all local governments can afford to do so, especially when the class of eligible employees increases so dramatically.

Employers may also face more workplace tension in working with union management. Risks of strikes and potential interruptions of services can interrupt important government projects. Additionally, employers will face difficulty in promoting talented and productive workers, and similarly will face difficulty in terminating unproductive workers.

Public local employees will also suffer under this bill. Employees may feel pressure to join unions, and will consequently lose portions of their income to union dues. Employees will also lose their individual autonomy by being forced to abide by union rules, which typically favor seniority and slow the advancement and promotion of newer employees.

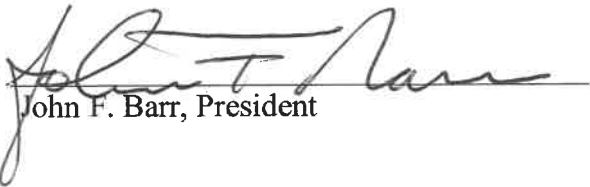
Finally, HB 0831 expands the authority and oversight of the State Public Employee Relations Board (“PERB”) to the Employee Organizations contemplated by the bill. With the increased authority and responsibility comes the need for an increased budget and staff. Moreover, centralizing authority with the PERB removes the local responsiveness and control over labor and employment matters.

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For these reasons, the Board respectfully requests the Committee decline to issue a favorable report on HB 0831.

Sincerely,

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
OF WASHINGTON COUNTY, MARYLAND

By: 
John F. Barr, President

cc (via email): Washington County Delegation