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Baltimore County

Chair, Rules Committee
Budget and Taxation Committee

Subcommittees
Capital Budget
Health and Human Services
Chair, Pensions

Joint Committees
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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
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TESTIMONY OF SENATOR SHELLY HETTLEMAN

**SB 253 Baltimore County Public Library – Collective Bargaining –
Supervisory Employees.**

Maryland has recognized the importance of collective bargaining by granting non-supervisory employees of the Baltimore County Public Library (BCPL) the right to organize and negotiate fair working conditions. Prior legislation ensured that library staff had a voice in shaping their workplace policies, leading to greater job stability and improved services for the community. In 2021, the Maryland General Assembly passed HB 45, authorizing non-supervisory staff of the BCPL to form a union and collectively bargain, should they choose to do so. Later that year, the staff successfully formed a union and negotiated collective bargaining agreements.

In 2024, the Library Workers Empowerment Act (LWEA), was enacted. This legislation extended collective bargaining rights across the state of Maryland. However, it excluded BCPL as it already had established a collective bargaining framework. Notably, LWEA allows for two bargaining units for those included in the legislation – one for employees, and one for supervisory employees. Because it is excluded from the LWEA legislation in 2024, BCPL supervisory employees lack the same rights afforded to their counterparts across the state. SB 914 seeks to extend these rights to BCPL supervisory employees, acknowledging their critical role in library operations and the need for equitable representation.

The absence of collective bargaining rights for the supervisory employees of BCPL poses several concerns. First, when unionized non-supervisor employees are promoted to supervisory roles, they face the option of forfeiting their union status or denying the promotion offer in order to retain their representation. Additionally, with the absence of these rights, supervisors may be subject to limited workplace resources, stagnant wages, and benefit disparities.

It is important to recognize that there are plenty of examples in Maryland where separate bargaining units of supervisory and non-supervisory employees share the same union affiliation. For example, Maryland State Education Association, MSEA, has local affiliates throughout the state that represent supervisory and nonsupervisory employees within the same school district in Allegany County, Carroll County, Dorchester County, Frederick County, Garrett County, and St. Mary's County. This clearly demonstrates that separate bargaining units can exist successfully under the same union while maintaining clear distinctions to prevent conflicts of interest. The separation by unit enables supervisors to advocate for their interests in their own collective bargaining unit.

SB 253 promotes equitable treatment by granting supervisory employees the same rights to collective bargaining as other staff members, ensuring all voices are heard in organizational decisions. It allows for unionized employees to retain their union status should they be promoted from a non-supervisory to a supervisory role. The bill also includes provisions to delineate management and supervisory roles clearly, ensuring that those with hiring or firing authority remain classified to prevent conflicts.

It is paramount that Maryland takes the necessary steps to ensure that all employees have essential rights in the workplace. We must make certain that supervisors, like their non-supervisory counterparts, are empowered in the workplace to advocate for themselves and remain committed to leadership and organizational performance. In order to do so, we must extend the collective bargaining rights that available across Maryland to BCPL supervisors. SB 253 will do just that. Therefore, I urge a favorable report from the committee.