

My name is Chris Lindstrom, a librarian from Charles County Public Library that certified a union with MCGEO last March.

I'm writing to express my support for HB-1492 and for the right to strike for teachers and library workers. I have seen firsthand how willing library administrators are to waste public funds dragging out collective bargaining through bad faith negotiations and stall tactics, how willing they are to create divisions and crush staff morale, and I have experienced firsthand how hard it is to defend against union busting without being able to fully engage or posture towards collective action.

When the bill that gave librarians the ability to unionize went into effect July 2024, our HR director violated the neutrality provision by emailing staff a list of anti-union talking points. They specifically pointed out that even if we unionized, we would be unable to ever strike. There can't be a stronger case for the ability to strike than our administration being so focused on it before our county even had a signed union authorization card. In Charles County, our organizing campaign was filled with attempts to union bust and undermine our success. When we certified last March, our library set aside \$250,000 for collective bargaining. After 9 months, negotiations have been tense, unproductive, and we're heading for a lengthy arbitration process. I firmly believe if we had the right to strike, even if it was never attempted or considered; they would have begrudgingly given us more respect and a faster resolution.

As a librarian, I'm fighting for the right to strike because it's the only thing that gives us parity with our bosses at the bargaining table. Ideally, we would never have to authorize a strike and would hope to engage with our bosses cooperatively. Ideally, we could have that relationship now but throughout Maryland, library administrators seek friction and suppression instead of mutual respect.

Our library patrons shouldn't suffer a worse library because of a dragged out labor dispute, the library shouldn't be making cuts to the book budget so they can fund excessive lawyer fees. The right to strike ensures that library workers and library administrators work in good faith and solve problems effectively so we can provide the best possible service and experience for the public we serve. It is in the best interest of the library as an institution that our labor power has actual power. Thank You.