

Testimony of Anita Bass
Circulation Assistant III, Baltimore County Public Library,
Before the House Appropriations Committee
January 27, 2021

H.R. 45 Education - Baltimore County Public Library - Collective Bargaining

Thank you Madam Chair, Vice Chair Chang and members of the Committee. It is my honor to be here before you to testify today, and share some of my thoughts on why attaining collective bargaining for the Baltimore County Public Library is important.

My name is Anita Bass and I have worked for the library system for eight years. I am a Circulation Assistant III and I work at the Baltimore County Public Library (BCPL) Essex Branch. I also live in District 6 and am happy to be represented by Delegate Metzgar.

As a Circulation Assistant, I process problem materials, mail, reserves, and various reports. I also assist with library card registration, basic catalog searches and with opening and closing procedures among other things.

I stand before you to testify that I have never been a part of a union. Nevertheless, today I feel like having a Union is everything we need at work. It is something we often talk about because we are attracted to having a professional represent our needs and concerns. It a chance to vote on matters that directly affect us. It is an opportunity to have a voice at work and a set of rules to settle disputes and disagreements.

We all strive for better communication especially when it comes to our concerns. Recently, our branch had an employee who reportedly tested positive for the coronavirus and unbelievably, the employees were not told about this for approximately two weeks. Even though I am a full-time employee, one of my issues is better benefits for part-time employees who do not have health care. These part-timers are not only my co-workers, but they are also my friends. Now with the pandemic, having the opportunity to negotiate a health care plan is essential and having a union, though not guaranteed, might be able to help us achieve this benefit for all of the library staff.

I also believe in transparency in promotions and in hiring practices. Our library staff does not reflect the diversity of our communities. Having a union will not guarantee we will have all of these, but it gives us a chance to sit at a table with the Baltimore County Public Library officials and discuss how we can make our jobs better, how we can help the BCPL with employment stability and how we can revive a higher morale among library staff.

Like everyone else, the pandemic has taken a toll on all workers. I simply want a voice during these difficult times where my suggestions for a better workplace are heard and will be taken seriously.

Thank you for your time and for giving me the opportunity to voice my concerns. I hope you will support H.R. 45, legislation that will allow us to have collective bargaining.

Thank you.