

Testimony of Bridget Fitzgerald

Grand Lodge Representative/ Organizer, International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers

Before the House Appropriations Committee

January 27, 2021

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

Good morning and thank you Chairwoman McIntosh, Vice Chairman Chang and all of the distinguished members of the Committee. My name is Bridget Fitzgerald and I am an organizer with the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM). In April, I will celebrate 24 years with the IAM.

The campaign to organize a union started nearly two years ago when I first met with a few employees from the Baltimore County Public Library System (BCPL). Many of you might be wondering how the library staff employees came to work with the Machinists Union. That answer can be found in who the IAM is as a union and knowing what employees want from union representation.

The IAM is more than 130 years old. We may have been borne from a secret meeting of railroad workers in Atlanta, Georgia, but we have evolved into an organization that represents workers in just about every imaginable sector in the U.S. and Canada. We still represent railroad workers, but we also represent employees in the airlines, manufacturing, aerospace, federal government as well as state, county and municipal employees working in the public sector.

When employees look for a union to represent them, they want an organization that is committed to the process; an organization that will negotiate stellar contracts, protect them and their agreement; and an organization dedicated to educating their members to work together in unity and solidarity. There are lots of good unions in the Labor Movement, but I believe the IAM is second to none, when it comes to what workers want. The BCPL employees looked into other unions, but came to us because they felt we are the best fit for them.

It is not easy for any group of workers to unionize. Even if this legislature passes the bill, it is not a done deal. There must still be enough interest to justify holding an election, and winning it. With BCPL, there is an additional challenge. State statute created the library system. We need H.R. 45 passed just to have the opportunity for BCPL employees to go through the unionization process.

Every BCPL employee I've spoken to loves their job. They take pride in serving the community and hope to make the Baltimore County Public Library System their career. However, nothing is perfect. These employees know that having a union will provide an opportunity to negotiate a contract that preserves the best things about their jobs and improves conditions that are not necessarily working well.

Essentially, BCPL employees want what I presume every employee wants, and that is the best work environment possible so they can realize their full potential for themselves and the community they serve. We ask you to vote in favor of this bill so BCPL employees can move forward toward the next steps in forming a union.

Thank you.