

Written Testimony of

MEGAN BAKER

RE: Support of HB 1225

Submitted to the Maryland House Appropriations Committee on March 4, 2022

Chairwoman McIntosh and members of the committee:

As long-time employee of Harford County Public Library (HCPL) for 17 years and Maryland resident, I urge you to support HB 1225 Education – Harford County Public Library – Collective Bargaining.

Over the past several years and pre-dating the COVID-19 pandemic, I have witnessed firsthand a severe decline in HCPL's working conditions, overall job satisfaction, and employee morale, specifically for non-management employees. What used to be an innovative work environment that operated on a "lead from any position" approach has eroded due to library leadership's lack of respect, poor communication, failure to properly address staff concerns, and an overall feeling of distrust.

Decisions are made by Senior Staff with little to no consideration for how staff will specifically be affected. For example, telling staff on a Friday that branch hours will be extended starting Monday. Library leadership's main focus has become attracting and retaining talented employees, but only for management and administrative positions. In November 2019, starting salaries for the top-tier jobs were increased significantly while non-supervisory positions like our support staff (circulation, library associates) were demoted and told that their jobs were "overvalued by previous administrations." For an organization that promotes Choose Civility, these type of actions by upper management are quite contradictory.

"If you don't like it here, then leave." That is the response that has been given to those of us who have tried to bring these issues to the attention of HCPL Administrators. A significant number of staff have also shared various concerns with the Library Board of Trustees, only to be met with little to no action. Meanwhile, people have indeed left...so many dedicated and talented coworkers who decided to continue their library careers elsewhere.

And that is what has brought us here seeking your assistance. During last year's legislative session, many of us followed Baltimore County Public Library staff's efforts to pass their legislation and that truly became a glimmer of hope that maybe we could do the same. As is true for many library workers, we really do love our jobs and take a great amount of pride in what we do. Ultimately, we simply want to use our collective voice to improve our workplace. As part of the First Amendment of the Constitution, the right to unionize one's workplace is recognized by U.S. Courts as a fundamental right. This is not something that should be affected by party politics. Passing HB 1225 would simply define the necessary steps for HCPL staff to

unionize SHOULD internal efforts to resolve the situation continue to fail. It is a pathway for my coworkers and I to exercise our Constitutionally protected right.

Non-management staff make up the majority of the library's workforce, yet we currently have no power when it comes to making decisions that directly affect us. Instead, we're expected to trust our library leadership "no questions asked." I believe even just the possibility of a union will change that. And personally, I'd rather try to fix the parts of Harford County Public Library that are broken than leave a job that I love.

I ask this committee to support the library workers of Harford County by offering a favorable report on HB 1225.

Thank you for your time and I appreciate your consideration.

Sincerely,
Megan Baker.