



HB 65 - SUPPORT
Maryland County Public Library Systems'
Employee Collective Bargaining Rights

January 31, 2023

Good afternoon Chairman Barnes, Vice Chair Chang, and distinguished members of this committee, especially my own representative Delegate Metzgar.

My name is Anita Bass. I had the pleasure of testifying before many of you during the 2021 session when I spoke in favor of the collective bargaining legislation for Baltimore County Public Library (BCPL). I come before you as the first Local Lodge President of BCPL-IAM United.

Having the ability to form a union and negotiate our first contract wasn't easy. BCPL staff worked with the IAM for three years. A large part of this extended timeline was having to pass legislation before we could have the hope of filing for a union election. We had the interest among the staff, but we didn't have a legal process to be able to bargain an enforceable contract addressing our wages, hours, and working conditions.

In our first contract, we negotiated wage increases, improved benefits for our part-time staff, and created a Labor-Management Committee to address issues in the workplace. Having a union isn't a promise of perfection, but it is an avenue for staff to have a voice and participate in the process.

Now, we are in the midst of negotiating our second contract. It has been a learning process for both the union and management, but we are committed to working together for the best library system possible.

House Bill 65 will provide a uniform and consistent process for my colleagues in other county library systems to organize for collective bargaining rights, if they so choose. Library workers without an interest in organizing a union will not be affected.

Libraries are cornerstones of our communities. Our work goes beyond helping a patron find a book. As frontline service providers we have an important perspective. Union representation gives us a seat at the table and an avenue to make the library better for our employees and the customers.

Unionizing may not be what every library system wants. That's fine. HB 65 doesn't make libraries union unless and until they choose to organize and win an election. For those systems who want to become union, HB 65 removes the need to repeat this legislative process piece by piece, county by county, session after session, over and over again.

On behalf of library workers across Maryland, I ask you to vote favorable on House Bill 65.

Thank you for your consideration and time.