

Written Testimony Submitted for the House Appropriations Committee
Testimony of Ryan Dize
SB 591 –The Library Workers Empowerment Act
February 29th, 2024

SUPPORT

Dear Chair Beidle, Vice-Chair Klausmeier, and Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

My name is Ryan Dize, and I am a Circulation Assistant at the Linthicum Branch of the Anne Arundel County Public Library system.

Collective bargaining is critical for our library systems and would help us have a voice not only with the library board, but also with leadership outside the board. Currently my wife and I are struggling to save enough to buy a home. We certainly couldn't afford to live in Anne Arundel County. With collective bargaining I think we'd have a better shot at achieving our goals and living closer to the community we serve.

I feel our leadership often dismisses the general library worker's opinion despite us being frontline staff with the perspective to see how leadership's decisions are implemented. Several branches have staff shortages because Part-time Hourly (PTH) employees have been routed to a single branch when before we had a similar sized pool of PTH Employees for an entire area. This allowed flexibility in staffing and more hours and experience for PTHs that wanted it. Now that's gone, and I see our library system suffering for it.

I am constantly worried as I look at other states and how their libraries have become battlegrounds for social issues. I am deeply worried that if there's a change on our board we could be in the same predicament. Did you know before our current board we were not allowed to have any LGBTQ+ or Pride decorations? Despite many of my coworkers being LGBTQ+, we couldn't even have a display. We need security for the most vulnerable, and a guarantee that we won't work under the whims of whoever current leadership is, but instead have protections guaranteed in a contract.

I hope library leadership sees that we won't stop trying to achieve our goals and win a protected voice at work. I hope they see how important this is to us. This isn't just about any single issue, it is about the future of our libraries. Please pass SB 591, and support the future of library workers here in Maryland.

Ryan Dize
Circ Assistant
AACPL