

**Written Testimony Submitted for the Senate Finance Committee**  
**Testimony of Caitlin Felder**  
**SB 591 –The Library Workers Empowerment Act**  
**February 29th, 2024**

**SUPPORT**

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

My name is Caitlin Felder, and I am a Teens Instructor and Research Specialist at the Savage branch of Howard County Libraries. I am writing today to urge passage of the Library Workers Empowerment Act. This legislation is necessary for the health and safety of our libraries.

It is no secret that the cost of living is rising. Rent, groceries, gas, interest rates on loans--they are constantly going up, and I know I'm not the only person living paycheck to paycheck at my job and feeling like one emergency will put me at risk of financial ruin. Being able to save, being able to afford a better quality of life, and set financial goals for the future are some of my hopes with collective bargaining. Through bargaining I hope to fight for better wages for myself and my coworkers. Maybe then I can move into the community that I work in and decrease my commute, or get a car that is more reliable. However, my current salary makes that impossible. I know I'm not alone in this, and that library workers across the state are facing the same financial constraints I am and having to make similar difficult decisions for themselves and their families.

These issues have compounded to cause a staffing crisis. Less staff means higher workloads on everyone else, and even though we keep voicing that we need more staff, the system leadership keeps pushing new initiatives, putting more and more on everyone's plates. Sometimes I don't get a break until my day is almost over. More often, I am eating lunch at my desk while working. This is not sustainable.

I would like us, as an organization, to acknowledge what our staff is reasonably capable of given the limits that the system leadership wants to put on our staffing numbers. I would like us to have a voice in the libraries that we work for and love. More than anything, I would like every library worker in the state of Maryland to have the choice to collectively bargain. Please pass SB 591, the Library Workers Empowerment Act, and make us partners at work.

Caitlin Felder  
Teens Instructor and Research Specialist  
Howard County Library System