

Written Testimony Submitted for the House Appropriations Committee
Testimony of Andy Yamazaki
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 Andy Yamazaki, and I am a Senior Data Specialist with Howard County Public Library System. I am writing today to urge you to support SB 591, the Library Workers Empowerment Act, which would grant collective bargaining rights to library workers across the state of Maryland.

It is my hope that through collective bargaining my coworkers and I will be able to advocate for ourselves and the public we serve. By bargaining over our wages and working conditions, I hope to be able to make my home life more manageable in an increasingly expensive and financially challenging world.

In addition, the stress of our jobs does not stop at the front door. Many staff members carry home the anxiety from our many concerns at work. Without a voice at the table, the interests of those working “in the trenches,” are not heard. The effect is that we often feel unseen and our challenges are not understood.

The fact is that Libraries are a critical part of our society. The staff of each library provide services that are indispensable. Without collective bargaining rights, the interests of the staff will never be heard, let alone addressed. We love our patrons, we love the library, and we love the communities in which we live. Without a union, the staff that provide said services will slowly atrophy and leave, leading to dire circumstances for all. If we want to ensure that our libraries are around for the generations that come after us, we need to be able to advocate on behalf of the people that keep them running. We need to be able to advocate on behalf of ourselves. Please support SB 591, the Library Workers Empowerment Act, and pass collective bargaining rights for every library worker in Maryland. Thank you.

Andy Yamazaki
Senior Data Specialist
HCLS