

Testimony of Morgan Michael
Library Associate II - Adult Services, Bel Air Branch
Harford County Public Library
Before the Senate Finance Committee
February 28, 2024
SB 591 Education - Public Libraries - Collective Bargaining
(Library Workers Empowerment Act)

My name is Morgan Michael, and I've been a Library Associate II in Harford County Public Library for almost seventeen years.

For three years we've worked with IAM to get a bill passed, enabling public library workers across the state to access their constitutional right to form a union. While I am drained and heartbroken, my passion for libraries and the service work we provide has not faded. The spirit of libraries resides in the workers -highly educated professionals who are often mistaken for volunteers. We need to be our own voice, to have the ability to advocate and fight for changes within the systems that are choosing to neglect us. We're underpaid and underappreciated, while the need for our services expands and increases throughout communities across the country.

Channels of communication to the administration and Board of Trustees in my system may appear open, but they are convoluted and often only a mirage. We're left uninformed about changes, confused about policies that change on a whim, and overworked thanks to staffing shortages. Morale is at an all time low. Based on the number of public library system workers ready to hold union elections, it's clear Harford County's is not the only system with issues that need resolving.

I'm asking for the passage of SB 591, because without it, library workers across the state will continue to experience enormous disrespect from their employers.

The libraries of our future depend upon the workers in them right now. Without this bill, we are hopeless for change. Thank you for your time and your support of this bill.