

**TESTIMONY AGAINST HB 881
A BILL AUTHORIZING STATEWIDE COLLECTIVE BARGAINING
FOR COUNTY LIBRARIES**

HEARING BEFORE THE HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

1:00 p.m., March 9, 2010

**Nancy Choice, Chief, Public Service and Branch Management,
Anne Arundel County Public Library**

Mr. Chairman and Distinguished Members of the Committee:

I ask that you oppose this legislation to establish a statewide process for collective bargaining in county public library systems in Maryland. In your deliberations I ask you to consider the significance that this initiative is coming from the United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1994, not from employee groups at any of the 22 non-unionized county library systems in Maryland. I ask that you oppose this bill which attempts to make a statewide ruling on this important local issue.

I have serious concerns about the financial impact of this legislation, especially during this state and national economic downturn. Individual staff members would have to pay an approximately \$520 per year union fee; this means that staff members in a county library system like Anne Arundel's with the potential for 200 eligible bargaining unit members could pay \$104,000 a year to the union representing them. There would also be significant additional costs to the Library's budget related to legal fees, arbitration payments, administrative costs related to negotiations, and staffing costs related to union activities which would have to be absorbed at a time of major fiscal constraints. I question whether our staff members, and the taxpayers of Anne Arundel County, would receive added value from union affiliation based on a review of an existing Maryland library contract.

The Anne Arundel County Public Library has a long history of collaborating and communicating with staff on issues that affect them and the service they provide to the residents of our County. I am concerned that this legislation would alter our relationship with employees – which is a strength of the library system and crucial to maintaining the high quality of service our staff takes such pride in and which is our foremost objective.