



March, 12, 2010

The Maryland chapter of The National Organization for Women is writing in support of HB881 and SB225, legislation that would allow library employees across Maryland the right to collectively bargain.

March is International Women's History Month. Women all over the world have real reason to celebrate their economic, social, and political achievements. But our work is clearly unfinished. It is 2010, and Maryland is denying a fundamental right to the 85 percent female workforce of Maryland's public libraries – the right to organize.

Inequities in the way public library employees, a profession that is 85 percent female, are treated – especially inequities in pay and benefits – have been allowed to persist for too long. At Maryland NOW, we feel that the time to correct these inequities is long past due.

Salaries for librarians are far below other professions with comparable educations. For new graduates working in public libraries, the mean annual salary was \$40,026. In contrast, the average salary for a database administrator with a master's degree in computer science was \$72,900 (a comparable profession that is more than 70 percent male).

Opponents of this bill argue that the tumultuous economy makes this the wrong time to grant collective bargaining rights to this workforce. **Tight budgets are no excuse for continued discrimination.**

Regardless, this bill is not about salaries. **It's about choice** – and tight budgets certainly are not a valid excuse to restrict the choice of educated professionals. At the end of the day, these employees may or may not elect union representation but they are entitled to that choice.

Collective bargaining rights have been extended to public sector employees in Maryland beginning with the teachers in the 1960s, county employees in the five largest counties in the 70s and 80s, and state employees over the last 10 years. Library workers have been excluded from these ordinances because they are technically employees of the libraries' board of trustees. So, while firefighters, police, teachers, and other public employees in Maryland have benefited from collective bargaining rights library workers have been left behind.

Make history for women in Maryland this month – pass HB881 and SB225.

Sandy Bell  
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