



The National Voice for Direct-Care RNs

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**Testimony In Opposition to HB 163
Corey Lanham, Mid-Atlantic Collective Bargaining Director
House Economic Matters Committee
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Good day. Thank you, Chairman Davis and members of the House Economic Matters Committee, for the opportunity to express the strong opposition of National Nurses United, the nation's largest union of registered nurses with 150,000 members, to HB 163. My name is Corey Lanham. I am the Mid-Atlantic Collective Bargaining Director for NNU.

On behalf of our several thousand members in Maryland, National Nurses United strongly urges you to vote against HB 163. This radical anti-worker, so-called "right-to-work" legislation poses a significant threat to public health and safety that would also threaten to reduce living standards for Maryland workers. Under the facade of protecting workers' rights, this bill is nothing short of a full scale assault on living standards for all workers that would seriously erode the ability of working people to speak out when public protections are at risk.

Data shows that states with "right-to-work" laws have lower wages, worse healthcare outcomes, including lower life expectancies, and higher workplace injury and death rates. Even the promise of an improved business climate is illusory. While this kind of bill has been on the wish lists of the nation's biggest and wealthiest corporate interests for years, and pushed in state legislatures across the country, they do not benefit working people. Bills like this should not be moved forward here in Maryland.

This legislation would prohibit collective bargaining agreements that require all employees in a unionized work place to pay fees to support the work of the union in negotiating improvements in their pay, benefits and working conditions. Federal law already provides for exemptions.

The real goal of 'right-to-work' has nothing to do with free speech or worker rights, and everything to do with increasing employer profits and suppression of the ability of workers to act collectively to improve their conditions and advocate for the public interest. Such legislation has no place in Maryland.

These laws are also intended to deprive unions of the resources they need in a corporate dominated political system to participate in the electoral process and elect candidates who will stand for worker rights, not corporate profits.

In healthcare, eroding the collective rights of nurses is particularly dangerous. Through their union, registered nurses who are members of National Nurses United have far greater strength to advocate for a broad range of patient protections and serve as a public watchdog of violations of patient safety by corporate healthcare employers.

Without the protection of a union, nurses have fewer protections from retaliation for speaking out about unsafe hospital and clinic conditions, which is even more of a concern under administrations that seek to roll back public regulatory protections. I am a Marylander and I know that this bill puts our families, our neighbors and all Marylanders at risk.

National Nurses United urges every member of the committee to do what is best for Maryland workers and their families, and those nurses care for, by opposing HB 163.

Nurses will never be silent in the face of attacks on their rights to advocate for public health and safety, or their right to form unions and act collectively for their own livelihood and working conditions. We ask that you join us in opposing this dangerous bill.

Thank you for your consideration.

National Nurses United (NNU) is the largest registered nurses' union in the country, representing more than 150,000 members, including thousands of Maryland residents. NNU works with nurses to improve patient care and working conditions at hospitals, advocate for nurses and patients, and win health care justice and quality health care for all. For more information about National Nurses United's work in Maryland, please contact Kenneth Zinn, Mid-Atlantic Regional Director, at kzinn@nationalnursesunited.org or call 240-235-2000.