



Statement of the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 689

HB 339– Unemployment Insurance - Disqualification - Stoppage of Work Caused by Labor Dispute
February 14th, 2024

TO: The Honorable C.T. Wilson and Members of the Economic Matters Committee
FROM: Matthew Girardi, Political & Communications Director, ATU Local 689

ATU Local 689 supports HB 339 and urges the House Economic Matters Committee to issue a favorable report. This bill is a long overdue measure to put power back in the hands of working class people in the state of Maryland.

At Local 689, we represent over 15,000 transit workers and retirees throughout the Washington DC Metro Area performing many skilled transportation crafts for the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), MetroAccess, DASH, and DC Streetcar among others. Our union helped turn low-wage, exploitative transit jobs into transit careers. We became an engine for the middle-class of this region.

Throughout our union's history, we have unfortunately had to fight tooth and nail to get fairness for our members. Be it a living wage, a secure retirement system, quality health insurance, or stable hours, Local 689 has been on the front lines of the fights to bring a decent quality of life to blue-collar workers. However, we know all too well that this means that companies will force us to strike.

Likewise, we have too often had to deal with companies and entities that would rather see our collective power crushed even while eating into their profits than sit down with us to find labor peace. This cannot be allowed to forever be the case. We have never taken labor actions lightly– our members are dedicated public servants who genuinely enjoy serving the public– be it the young scholars they pick up on their route to school or the person with a disability they assist with paratransit. When we strike, we do so to ensure that our riders, our fellow workers, and our equipment are treated with the care, dignity, and respect they deserve.

This bill would ensure that companies with deep pockets and disregard for their riders and employees alike are not able to easily union-bust. Good faith bargaining is necessary and allowing for workers to take unemployment compensation after 14 days of a labor action means that companies would be incentivized to come to the bargaining table with a fair offer.

Local 689 thanks Delegates Vogel, Charkoudian, Foley, Stewart, and Wilkins for introducing this worthy measure and urges the committee to issue a favorable report.