



LEGISLATIVE POSITION:

Unfavorable

House Bill 339

Unemployment Insurance – Disqualification – Stoppage of Work Caused by Labor Dispute

House Economic Matters Committee

Wednesday, February 14, 2024

Dear Chairman Wilson and Members of the Committee:

Founded in 1968, the Maryland Chamber of Commerce is the leading voice for business in Maryland. We are a statewide coalition of more than 6,800 members and federated partners working to develop and promote strong public policy that ensures sustained economic recovery and growth for Maryland businesses, employees, and families.

HB 339 would allow employees who are not working because of their voluntary participation in a strike causing a stoppage of work to begin collecting unemployment insurance benefits 14 days after the stoppage of work began.

It is important to draw a distinction between reasons an individual may file for unemployment insurance benefits. While an individual is entitled to UI benefits when they've lost employment through no fault of their own, someone voluntarily walking away from their work because of an unresolved dispute between an employer and a labor union (which the employee is voluntarily participating in), does not constitute an appropriate use of unemployment insurance benefits. Further, workers are already entitled to benefits during a "lock-out" (employer caused work stoppage), allowing workers to claim benefits during an employee-caused work stoppage is clear double dipping of the UI program.

Finally, as the Committee debates other large-scale changes to Maryland's unemployment insurance program with the goal of ensuring long-term trust fund solvency, creating additional situations to draw benefits from the fund would be counterintuitive.

For these reasons, the Maryland Chamber of Commerce respectfully requests an **unfavorable report** on **HB 339**.