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Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 1043

Subcontracting for Services

Senate - March 6, 2024 - Education, Energy and the Environment Committee @ 1 p.m.

Position: Favorable

The Baltimore Teachers Union supports Senate Bill 1043, which establishes critical safeguards and protections for public school employees, students, families, and the public through key reforms to privatizing or subcontracting school services.

The Baltimore Teachers Union represents 8,280 teachers, paraprofessionals, counselors, clinicians, librarians, secretaries, community school site specialists, bus transportation aides, and many more school-based and central office support staff. We are 4 out of 5 workers in Baltimore City Public Schools, serving 75,595 students and their families. Our national union, the American Federation of Teachers, represents over 1.7 million educators, healthcare workers, and public employees in the United States and its territories.

Senate Bill 1043 aims to build the capacity of school districts to deliver high quality essential services to students, their families and the public by implementing common sense reforms for privatization. Senate Bill 1043 safeguards the interests and job security of public school employees by regulating the subcontracting of their jobs during the term of a collective bargaining agreement by requiring public school employers to engage in a collaborative process with collective bargaining organizations before privatizing services and entering agreements with subcontractors. When outside vendors perform services, as opposed to the educators and support staff that know students and families best, it can lead to disruption in essential service and limit public transparency.

This bill preserves high labor standards by prohibiting the subcontracting of public school employees' jobs during the term of a collective bargaining agreement. This provision is crucial for maintaining stability within our public school system and ensuring that contractual agreements between employers and employees are respected. Additionally, the bill prohibits a subcontracting agreement from being approved primarily on the basis that savings will result from lower wages and benefits from the employees of a subcontractor. School districts do a disservice to the public when worker exploitation is pursued as a legitimate cost-saving measure.

Additionally, the bill establishes a structured process for public school employers to meet and consult with local unions before making any decisions to subcontract work or services performed by public school employees. This proactive approach promotes transparency, open communication, and collaboration, allowing both parties to negotiate the effects of such decisions. This not only strengthens the relationship between employers and employees but also fosters a sense of mutual respect and understanding.

In conclusion, the BTU strongly supports SB 1043 as it aligns with our commitment to protecting the rights and well-being of public school employees. We believe that this legislation will contribute to a more stable, collaborative, and fair working environment within our public education system.

Thank you for considering our testimony and for your dedication to ensuring the welfare of educators and staff across our state.

It is for these reasons the BTU supports Senate Bill 1043 and urges a favorable report.

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