

**FAVORABLE
Senate Bill 871
Unemployment Insurance – Disqualification – Stoppage of Work Caused by
Labor Dispute**

**Senate Finance Committee
March 5, 2024**

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The Maryland State Education Association supports Senate Bill 871. Senate Bill 871 establishes that the general disqualification from receiving unemployment insurance benefits due to a strike does not apply for any week beginning after the first fourteen days of an individual's unemployment resulting from the stoppage of work, provided that other eligibility conditions remain applicable.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our almost 900,000 students so they can pursue their dreams. MSEA also represents 39 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3 million-member National Education Association (NEA).

Currently, public school employees in Maryland do not have the right to strike. However, MSEA stands in solidarity with workers in the private sector who strike for better pay, benefits, and working conditions that ultimately lead to a better way of life for working families and build a more fair economy. MSEA believes that withholding one's labor is a basic right, whether in the public or private sector.

The decision to strike is a method of last resort in a labor-management dispute, after all other avenues have been exhausted. Workers who strike may lose their paychecks, employee benefits, and in many cases, may be permanently replaced and lose their



jobs altogether from strike-breakers.¹ Despite significant risks workers face when they strike, many nonetheless do so because a strike is an effective tool for workers to counter-balance the power of their employers.

Unemployment insurance can provide a financial lifeline to striking workers as they advocate for fair negotiations and a final contract with their employer. Several states have introduced legislation to extend unemployment insurance benefits to striking workers, and two states, New York and New Jersey, currently provide unemployment insurance benefits to striking workers. MSEA believes this legislation will incentivize the peaceful settlement of disputes between management and labor during negotiations, yet provide critical financial assistance to workers, if necessary.

We urge the committee to issue a Favorable Report on Senate Bill 871.

¹ Daniel Perez, *Extending unemployment insurance to striking workers would cost little and encourage fair negotiations*, Economic Policy Institute (January 29, 2024), <https://www.epi.org/blog/extending-unemployment-insurance-to-striking-workers-would-cost-little-and-encourage-fair-negotiations/#:~:text=As%20shown%20in%20Table%201,a%2014%2Dday%20waiting%20period>