



# MARYLAND STATE & D.C. AFL-CIO

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**HB 233 - Labor and Employment - Mandatory Meetings on Religious or Political Matters -  
Employee Attendance and Participation (Maryland Worker Freedom Act)  
House Economic Matters Committee  
January 30, 2025**

**SUPPORT**

**Donna S. Edwards**

**President**

**Maryland State and DC AFL-CIO**

Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to HB 233. My name is Donna S. Edwards, and I am the President of the Maryland State and DC AFL-CIO. On behalf of the 300,000 union members in the state of Maryland, I offer the following comments.

“Captive audience” meetings encourage unfair practices by undermining the fundamental rights of employees to decide for themselves whether or not to attend an employer-sponsored meeting, discussing political or religious matters while on the job. Under current law, employers have the power to make these meetings mandatory, oftentimes using intimidating or manipulating measures to enforce attendance. Many times, employees face dismissal, threats of being fired, refusal to hire, or other penalization if they choose not to attend. This creates a biased and tenuous work environment where employees are not free to make their own decisions and feel that they must agree with their employer’s views.

In 2023, Maryland took a significant step in protecting workers by passing HB 984, the Public Employee Relations Act, which included provisions that prohibited public employers from forcing employees to attend mandatory meetings where they share their personal beliefs on political or religious matters. HB 233 builds on this progress by expanding these protections to all sectors in Maryland.

This legislation ensures that employers cannot require attendance at meetings where they share their personal beliefs on political or religious matters, explicitly barring them from using retaliatory practices against employees who choose not to attend. Notably, this legislation does not infringe on an employer’s ability to share information required by law or casually communicate. Rather, it strikes a balance, creating a fair workplace where employees are free to form and hold their own opinions without fear of intimidation or retaliation.

HB 233 is a necessary step in protecting the rights of *all* workers in Maryland, promoting workplace fairness, and preventing the misuse of employer power. For these reasons, we urge a favorable report of HB 233.