

From the Desk of Congressman David Trone

February 18, 2026

The Honorable Guy Guzzone
Chair, Budget and Taxation Committee
3 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

The Honorable Jim Rosapepe
Vice Chair, Budget and Taxation Committee
3 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chair Guzzone, Vice Chair Rosapepe, and Members of the Committee,

I write in support of *Senate Bill 28 - Arbitration Reform for State Employees Act of 2026* because it affirms a basic principle that should guide our work in public service: every worker deserves a meaningful voice in negotiating the terms of their employment.

Collective bargaining is not a partisan issue—it is a public safety and good-governance issue. When workers have access to fair negotiation processes and impartial arbitration, it reduces conflict, strengthens accountability, and ensures stability in the delivery of essential government services. SB 28 provides important guardrails to make sure disputes can be resolved responsibly and transparently, while still respecting budget realities and the interests of taxpayers.

I have seen firsthand why these protections matter.

In 2018, the professional firefighters of Frederick County fought for the right to bargain collectively and to use binding arbitration when negotiations reached an impasse. I stood with them because politics should never undermine public safety. Voters agreed, approving a charter amendment that strengthened negotiation rights and improved labor-management relations. In 2022, when the rights won by the firefighters were once again threatened by legislation authored by the County Council, I again stood publicly with Frederick County firefighters to defend the will of the voters and support their right to binding arbitration.

As the International Association of Fire Fighters made clear at the time, limiting firefighters' collective bargaining rights put politics ahead of public safety. Strong negotiation tools do not weaken government—they strengthen it by ensuring experienced professionals can advocate for the resources, staffing, and working conditions necessary to keep communities safe.

Public employees perform uniquely vital roles. They respond to emergencies, maintain infrastructure, educate our children, and keep our communities functioning. Because their work directly impacts the health and safety of our neighbors, we must use every responsible tool available to ensure the government works effectively and fairly. That includes protecting meaningful collective bargaining and arbitration rights.

Senate Bill 28 - Arbitration Reform for State Employees Act of 2026 is a practical step toward ensuring Maryland's public institutions remain strong, responsive, and rooted in respect for the people who make them work.

For these reasons, I urge your support of this measure.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "David Trone".

David Trone

Former Member of Congress