

HB 604 - Arbitration Reform for State Employees Act of 2026
House Government, Labor, and Elections Committee
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SUPPORT

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President
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Madame Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 604. On behalf of 700 affiliated unions, I offer the following comments.

Binding arbitration is mutually beneficial to our state government, our state employees, and taxpayers.

HB 604 proposes amending the Maryland Constitution to establish binding arbitration for certain state worker collective bargaining. Binding arbitration is a common dispute resolution process in both private and public sector labor relations all around the country. HB 604 provides balance in the negotiations process, giving both parties every motivation to bargain in good faith and work toward a timely agreement.

Public sector workers in the following states have some form of binding interest arbitration for their collective bargaining processes: Alaska, California, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Hawaii, Illinois, Iowa, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Texas, Vermont, Washington, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. Even in Maryland, certain county workers in Anne Arundel, Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Frederick County, Howard, Montgomery, Prince George's, and the Town of Ocean City have binding interest arbitration for some or all of their units. Maryland is in the minority of states with public sector collective bargaining that do not also have binding interest arbitration.

The process listed in HB 604 for the selection of neutral arbitrators is shared by many unions and employers all over the country. This bill is a fair and balanced approach to providing effective and efficient negotiations for our state employees.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on HB 604.