

SENATE BILL 417

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6lr1984
CF HB 45

By: Senator Lam

Introduced and read first time: January 29, 2026

Assigned to: Finance

A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Labor and Employment – Mandatory Meetings on Religious or Political**
3 **Matters – Employee Attendance and Participation**
4 **(Maryland Worker Freedom Act)**

5 FOR the purpose of prohibiting employers and their agents, representatives, and designees
6 from taking certain actions against an employee or applicant for employment
7 because the employee or applicant takes certain actions regarding
8 employer-sponsored meetings during which the employer communicates the opinion
9 of the employer regarding religious matters or political matters; authorizing an
10 employee to file a certain complaint with the Commissioner of Labor and Industry;
11 authorizing the Commissioner to take certain actions related to violations of certain
12 provisions of this Act; requiring employers to notify the employer's employees in a
13 certain manner of the requirements and protections provided under certain
14 provisions of this Act; requiring the Commissioner to develop and make available a
15 certain poster and model notice; and generally relating to employee attendance and
16 participation in employer meetings on religious or political matters.

17 BY adding to
18 Article – Labor and Employment
19 Section 3–718
20 Annotated Code of Maryland
21 (2025 Replacement Volume)

22 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
23 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

24 **Article – Labor and Employment**

25 **3–718.**

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



1 (A) (1) IN THIS SECTION THE FOLLOWING WORDS HAVE THE MEANINGS
2 INDICATED.

3 (2) "POLITICAL MATTERS" MEANS MATTERS RELATING TO:

4 (I) ELECTIONS FOR POLITICAL OFFICE;

5 (II) POLITICAL PARTIES;

6 (III) PROPOSALS TO CHANGE:

7 1. LEGISLATION;

8 2. REGULATIONS; OR

9 3. PUBLIC POLICY; OR

10 (IV) THE DECISION TO JOIN OR SUPPORT A POLITICAL PARTY OR
11 POTENTIAL CIVIC, COMMUNITY, FRATERNAL, OR LABOR ORGANIZATION.

12 (3) "RELIGIOUS MATTERS" MEANS MATTERS RELATING TO
13 RELIGIOUS BELIEF, AFFILIATION, AND PRACTICE OR THE DECISION TO JOIN AND
14 SUPPORT A RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION OR ASSOCIATION.

15 (B) THIS SECTION DOES NOT APPLY TO AN EMPLOYER THAT:

16 (1) IS A RELIGIOUS CORPORATION, ORGANIZATION, OR ASSOCIATION
17 OR AN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION OR SOCIETY THAT IS EXEMPT FROM THE
18 REQUIREMENTS OF TITLE VII OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964 UNDER 42 U.S.C.
19 § 2000E-1(A) OR IS EXEMPT FOR EMPLOYMENT DISCRIMINATION PROTECTIONS
20 UNDER STATE LAW;

21 (2) IS A POLITICAL ORGANIZATION THAT REQUIRES ITS EMPLOYEES
22 TO ATTEND AN EMPLOYER-SPONSORED MEETING OR TO PARTICIPATE IN
23 COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE EMPLOYER OR THE EMPLOYER'S AGENTS OR OTHER
24 REPRESENTATIVES FOR THE PURPOSE OF COMMUNICATING THE EMPLOYER'S
25 POLITICAL TENETS OR PURPOSES;

26 (3) IS AN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION THAT REQUIRES A STUDENT OR
27 AN INSTRUCTOR TO ATTEND LECTURES ON POLITICAL OR RELIGIOUS MATTERS AS
28 PART OF THE REGULAR COURSEWORK AT THE INSTITUTION;

10 (6) IS A GOVERNMENTAL UNIT HOLDING A NEW EMPLOYEE
11 ORIENTATION.

12 (C) AN EMPLOYER, OR THE EMPLOYER'S AGENT, REPRESENTATIVE, OR
13 DESIGNEE, MAY NOT:

14 (1) DISCHARGE, DISCIPLINE, OR OTHERWISE PENALIZE OR
15 THREATEN TO DISCHARGE, DISCIPLINE, OR OTHERWISE PENALIZE AN EMPLOYEE
16 BECAUSE THE EMPLOYEE DECLINES TO ATTEND, PARTICIPATE IN, OR LISTEN TO
17 COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE EMPLOYER, OR THE EMPLOYER'S AGENT,
18 REPRESENTATIVE, OR DESIGNEE, IN AN EMPLOYER-SPONSORED MEETING DURING
19 WHICH THE EMPLOYER COMMUNICATES THE OPINION OF THE EMPLOYER
20 REGARDING RELIGIOUS MATTERS OR POLITICAL MATTERS; OR

26 (D) THIS SECTION DOES NOT PROHIBIT AN EMPLOYER:

27 (1) FROM COMMUNICATING INFORMATION THAT THE EMPLOYER IS
28 REQUIRED BY LAW TO COMMUNICATE:

32 (3) FROM COMMUNICATING TO ITS EMPLOYEES INFORMATION THAT
33 IS NECESSARY FOR ITS EMPLOYEES TO PERFORM THEIR JOB DUTIES;

6 (5) THAT IS A GOVERNMENTAL UNIT FROM COMMUNICATING TO ITS
7 EMPLOYEES INFORMATION RELATED TO A POLICY OF THE EMPLOYER OR A LAW
8 THAT THE EMPLOYER IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ADMINISTERING.

9 (E) (1) IF AN EMPLOYEE BELIEVES THAT AN EMPLOYER HAS VIOLATED
10 THIS SECTION, WITHIN 180 DAYS AFTER THE ALLEGED VIOLATION, THE EMPLOYEE
11 MAY FILE A WRITTEN COMPLAINT WITH THE COMMISSIONER.

(I) FOR AN INITIAL VIOLATION, UP TO \$10,000; OR

21 (II) FOR A SUBSEQUENT VIOLATION, UP TO \$25,000.

22 (4) IN ADDITION TO CIVIL PENALTIES ASSESSED UNDER PARAGRAPH
23 (3) OF THIS SUBSECTION, THE COMMISSIONER MAY:

24 (I) ISSUE AN ORDER TO CEASE AND DESIST FROM THE
25 VIOLATION AND ANY FURTHER SIMILAR VIOLATIONS; OR

26 (II) AWARD ANY OTHER RELIEF THAT THE COMMISSIONER
27 DETERMINES IS APPROPRIATE, INCLUDING:

B. BACK PAY AND INTEREST AMOUNTS OWED; OR

11 (F) (1) EACH EMPLOYER SHALL NOTIFY THE EMPLOYER'S EMPLOYEES
12 OF THE REQUIREMENTS AND PROTECTIONS PROVIDED UNDER THIS SECTION BY:

17 (II) PROVIDING THE NOTICE DEVELOPED UNDER PARAGRAPH
18 (2) OF THIS PARAGRAPH TO EACH NEW EMPLOYEE ON HIRING.

23 (II) THE POSTER AND MODEL NOTICE DEVELOPED UNDER
24 SUBPARAGRAPH (I) OF THIS PARAGRAPH SHALL BE MADE AVAILABLE IN ENGLISH
25 AND ANY OTHER LANGUAGES COMMONLY USED BY EMPLOYEES IN THE STATE.

30 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That the Commissioner of Labor
31 and Industry shall develop and make available the poster and model notice required under
32 § 3-718(f)(2) of the Labor and Employment Article, as enacted by Section 1 of this Act, on
33 or before November 1, 2026.

1 SECTION 3. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect
2 October 1, 2026.