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Testimony

HB 1134 Circuit Court and District Court Employees Support

AFSCME Council 3 supports HB 1134. This legislation would extend the right to collective bargaining to employees of the Circuit and District Courts. This is the largest group of state employees who have yet to be provided the right to vote on whether to have an exclusive representative for the purposes of negotiating a collective bargaining agreement. Currently they work under a personnel system designed by offices of the Chief Judge of the Judiciary with no organized input from employees.

The bill provides a labor board specific to the Judiciary. It consists of 5 members which include three appointed by the Chief Judge and two appointed by the Governor. Of those appointed by the Chief Judge two are from lists recommended by the House Speaker and Senate President, and one is a member of the State Judiciary. Of those appointed by the Governor, one is a member of the National Academy of Arbitrators and one is a member of the public.

The Judicial Labor Board would establish guidelines regarding the design of the bargaining unit, establish procedures consistent with those granted to state and higher education employees for petitioning for an election, holding an election and certifying an exclusive representative. They would also investigate unfair labor practices.

Why is this bill important? Collective bargaining provides employees the opportunity to have direct input regarding their working conditions. Often this feedback is helpful to managers and results in a more efficient workplace. Morale improves when employees are actively engaged in determining the conditions under which they work.

Other states provide collective bargaining to judicial employees. By our count, 13 states have authorized this process with some of them including court employees within state collective bargaining. It is time for Maryland to join other states in recognizing this important workforce and giving them basic democratic rights to elect a union. Please support HB 1134.

Every AFSCME Maryland State and University contract guarantees a right to union representation.
An employee has the right to a union representative if requested by the employee.
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