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TESTIMONY
HB 163 LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT- LABOR ORGANIZATIONS-
RIGHT TO WORK
HOUSE ECONOMIC MATTERS COMMITTEE
February 4, 2020

AFSCME representing 45,000 employees in Maryland State’s and local government, stands in opposition to HB 163.

“Right to work” is the name for a policy that is designed to take away the rights of hard-working people. Supporters of right to work claim that these laws protect workers from being forced to join a union. The reality is that federal law already makes it illegal to force someone to join a union. The real purpose of right to work is to tilt the balance towards big corporations and further rig the system at the expense of working families. These laws make it harder for workers to form unions and to collectively bargain for fair wages, benefits, and proper working conditions.

Supporters of right to work claim that it will help spur job growth and attract new companies to states which is quite the misconception considering that 7 of the 10 states with the highest unemployment rates are also right to work states. Many factors influence business site location decisions, but right to work isn’t among the top five – not even in the top ten. The availability of skilled laborers, the quality of life the company’s executives will have, access to major highways, proximity to markets, robust telecom infrastructure, facility and energy costs, the provision of training subsidies, construction costs, and corporate tax incentives matter the most —not right to work laws.

As the elected union for most bargaining units of State and Local/Municipal Government Employees, AFSCME negotiates for wages, benefits, and working conditions on behalf of employees. AFSCME represents all the workers in a collective bargaining unit, whether they are a union member or not, to ensure that both the employer and the employees agreed upon contract is properly enforced. Most importantly, we work with the employee’s state and local government agencies to create things such as labor-management committees in order to work collaboratively to find resolutions on the many issues impacting government operations. For example, short staffing in state government or cost savings work projects in cities and counties. Enacting right to work would undo gains won over the years in Maryland for workers.

For these reasons we urge the committee to vote UNFAVORABLY on HB 163.