

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO HB 163
Right to Work
February 4th, 2019

TO: Hon. Dereck Davis, Chair, and members of the House Economic Matters Committee
FROM: Gino Renne, President, UFCW Local 1994 MCGEO, Executive Vice President, UFCW International

UFCW Local 1994 MCGEO stands in strong opposition to HB 163, a so-called “right-to-work” law. Once again, this bill is rearing its ugly head straight from the American Legislative Exchange Council’s (ALEC) playbook. In fact, its text has been mostly lifted from ALEC’s model legislation (with the exception of the exemptions added into the bill that make no sense in light of the recent *Janus* Supreme Court decision).

“Right to work” provides no rights and no work. It’s a partisan political ploy used by extremist groups and their corporate backers looking to undermine the basic rights and legal protections of workers and to weaken their collective bargaining power. If passed, this bill would lower the pay and benefits of workers everywhere and drop everyone in the state of Maryland to a lower living standard.

In addition, this law, which would allow workers in union shops to opt out of paying union dues, would be an illegal taking of union and union members’ property, since federal labor law requires unions to represent all employees covered by collective bargaining agreements, whether they pay dues or not.

Proponents of RTW often speak of workers being “forced” to join a union as a condition of employment. Union membership is voluntary; it is against federal law to force an employee to join a union as a condition of employment. A union member has the freedom to resign his or her membership at any time.

Unions are member organizations, like private clubs, member social organizations, and even the Chamber of Commerce. Elected officers and an elected Executive Board comprised of rank-and-file members govern my local union and most others.

No state that has passed “right to work” has been able to effectively prove that it has attracted jobs and businesses.

“While you may argue that having a job is better than not having a job—no matter how low or unfair the wage paid for that job maybe—right-to-work laws are not designed to do anything to improve the lot of the American worker. At best, they may result in a few low-paying businesses moving into your state...But, in the long run, it is a pretty reasonable bet that all working Americans will suffer as a result.”

—Rick Unger, *Forbes*, 'Right-to-Work' Laws Explained, Debunked and Demystified
12/12/12

UFCW Local 1994 MCGEO represents 10,000 working men and women in the state of Maryland, we vehemently oppose HB 163 and we request an unfavorable vote on this bill.