



**TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO HB 163**

**Right to Work  
February 4, 2020**

**TO:** Hon. Dereck Davis, Chair, and members of the House Economic Matters Committee  
**FROM:** Patrick Jones Sr., Regional Director

The Mid-Atlantic Regional Joint Board strongly opposes House Bill 163 – Right to Work. The Mid-Atlantic Regional Joint Board/Workers United represents more than 5,000 workers in Maryland and across eight states, including the right to work states of Virginia and West Virginia. Our members work in laundry, food service, auto parts and auto supply, hospitality, gaming, food service, bag and packaging, apparel, textile, manufacturing and distribution, retail and related industries. We have seen how right to work laws impact working families and their communities.

House Bill 163 seeks to eliminate collective bargaining protections for workers, including educators and police officers by repealing provisions of State law that authorize an employer to negotiate or collect dues, contributions or service fees from employees for representation by a labor organization. In effect, this bill would make it illegal for a group of unionized workers to negotiate a contract that requires each employee who enjoys the benefit of the contract to pay his or her share of the costs of negotiating and overseeing it. Further, this bill seeks to pre-empt local ordinances that authorize municipal and county governments to negotiate with their workers.

Proponents of this law falsely claim that it will ensure that no one is forced to be a member of a union or pay to advocate political causes they do not support. *But those things are already illegal under federal law.* Under federal law, unions are required to represent every employee covered by a union contract, even those who aren't members. If a non-dues-paying employee has a problem at work, the union is required to represent her—including providing an attorney at no charge if one is needed—in exactly the same way it would represent a dues-paying member. Providing the same range of benefits to dues-paying members and nonmembers who don't pay fees starves the union and diminishes the ability of unions to negotiate higher wages and benefits for workers.

Supporters have also promoted it as a strategy for attracting new business to Maryland and allowing existing businesses to grow, however our first-hand experience as well as evidence from the 28 states that have enacted similar right-to-work laws shows that the actual impact on the economy is just the opposite. A 2015 study by the Economic Policy Institute shows that RTW laws like HB 163 do not have any positive impact on job growth. <sup>i</sup>

Statistics show states that have enacted RTW have seen a greater than 3% drop in wages at nearly every level and across all sectors<sup>ii</sup>. Additionally, the 12 of the fifteen states that have passed “right to work” laws, have the greatest wage gap between men and women<sup>iii</sup>. By contrast, Maryland now leads the nation in the smallest wage gap, thanks in part to strong support for collective bargaining and strong laws passed by the General Assembly.

By hamstringing workers’ ability to bargain collectively, to share the costs of legal representation, or pool their money for legislative remedies to unaddressed grievances, RTW laws weaken workplace protections, and decrease the likelihood that employers will be required to negotiate with their employees. States with laws like those proposed by HB 163 have 36% more EEOC claims than states that allow collective bargaining.<sup>iv</sup> OSHA statistics show that these states also have significantly higher rates of reported injuries and deaths on the job.

Our state is a state that is moving in the right direction, as is evidenced by our top-rated schools, highly rated quality of life, best-trained workforce and strong protections for workers' rights. HB 163 is a threat to the policies the Maryland General Assembly has passed by overwhelming majorities to keep Maryland moving forward.

We urge you to render an UNFAVORABLE Report on HB 163.

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<sup>i</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey (BLS-CPS), 2017. Public data series aggregated from basic monthly CPS microdata and accessed through the

<sup>ii</sup> Elise Gould and Will Kimball, “*Right-to-Work*” States Still Have Lower Wages, Economic Policy Institute, April 2015.

<sup>iii</sup> Valerie Wilson and Julia Wolfe, *Black Workers in Right-to-Work (RTW) States Tend to Have Lower Wages Than in Missouri and Other Non-RTW States*, Economic Policy Institute, May 2018.

<sup>iv</sup> US Equal Opportunity Employment Commission, FY 2009 - 2019 EEOC Charge Receipts by State. [https://www1.eeoc.gov/eeoc/statistics/enforcement/charges\\_by\\_state.cfm#centercol](https://www1.eeoc.gov/eeoc/statistics/enforcement/charges_by_state.cfm#centercol)