

HB 1321 Labor and Employment - Right to Work

STRONGLY OPPOSE

March 5, 2021

Dear Chairman Davis and Members of the Economic Matters Committee,

We and our Union Brothers and Sisters are in strong opposition to House Bill 1321. We are members of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 24, located in Baltimore. In addition, we are lifelong residents of Maryland.

Right to work laws have one purpose, to weaken unions, and, thus the power of working people, period. It is a well-funded and coordinated campaign across America to take even more power from working families. The results from Right to Work States are in, and they are not good for the middle class. States with Right to Work laws average lower wages, lower rates of health insurance, and higher rates of poverty. That is what Right to Work gets you: the right to work for LESS!

Right to work is bad for all your constituents. It means working people will have less opportunities, not more. Unions raise wages and working conditions for all workers, not just their members. Please vote unfavorably on HB 1321 and keep Right to Work out of Maryland.

Sincerely,

Andreas Psaromatis, member, IBEW Local 24

Blaine Boone, member, IBEW Local 24

James Chwirut, member, IBEW Local 24

Joshua Hill, member, IBEW Local 24

Timothy Myers, member, IBEW Local 24

David Smith, member, IBEW Local 24

Jennifer Andrzejewski
1565 Doxbury Road
Baltimore, MD 21286

March 2, 2021

To whom it may concern,

My name is Jennifer Andrzejewski and I've been a member of the IATSE local 487 for 7 years. Please find below my reflections on being in a union and why I think unions are important:

- I am 34 years old and I have a bachelors degree from a very affordable university in Maryland. I am the most successful and financially stable person from my friend group and social peers. I am not saying this to brag. I'm saying this because I've seen what the lack of frankly worthwhile jobs has done to my peers. I know at least 50 people with education greater than mine, that struggle to live at the lower income levels. They work in cafes, walk dogs, bar tend, etc. I feel so insanely lucky to have the job I do with 487.
- Having a union rep and shop stewards who have my back have helped me through hard times at the job. Every job has conflict - but the fact that I have someone to call who's purpose is to know the labor rules & laws and my rights within them has been so encouraging and helpful. It's not a small thing to have that kind of support. It greatly helps morale for me and other crew members. I've seen that in action. The idea of productions that free to operate outside of rules worries me.
- The amount of non-union commercials has sky rocketed in recent years. Not only are their standard of pay lower, they are more willing to put crew members in dangerous situations (in order to save money) because there is no oversight. Because directors and producers know there is no threat of union action, I've seen dangerous decisions be made that jeopardize crew and talent. On one commercial, a director asked teenagers to break glass and jump on windshields at a junkyard. One of the young actors was cut by glass and was done for the day. That would have never happened on a union commercial. On another non-union job, I was asked to work on a blacktop parking lot organizing wardrobe in 95 degree heat and very high humidity. I did the job as best I could but fainted from heat exhaustion when I finally sat down. Again, this is an example of a line that wouldn't have been pushed if it was a union job. I know it may seem like a glamorous industry, but, because of the hours, the physical nature of the work, risk-taking in action shots, this job has the potential to be very dangerous - as we saw on the set where Sarah Jones died.

- *There is no comparison of the quality of work that comes from union vs non-union crew. Union crews out pace Non-union crews at every measure.* This is not because Non-union crews aren't good - it's because they don't receive the same quality of on-the-job training. Union standards of work are extremely high. To be honest, when I first started this job and realized the standard I was being held to (my best work possible, at all times), it changed who I was as a person. That pride in my work that union jobs instilled in me bled over to all other areas of life. Union crews set the standard for the whole industry.

These four points are the most important aspects of union work for me - but there are absolutely more. Thank you for taking the time to read this. Please reconsider allowing Maryland to be a right to work state. Having a union job was the best thing that ever happened to my career, and I feel so lucky to be a member.

Thanks
Jennifer Andrzejewski
443-465-1411



March 3, 2021

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO HB 1321 Labor and Employment – Right to Work, March 5th, 2021

TO: Hon. Dereck Davis, Chair, and members of the House Economic Matters Committee
FROM: Kevin Devogel, Set Painter IATSE Local 487 Baltimore, MD

As a proud union member of IATSE Local 487 I strongly oppose any “Right to Work” legislation in our state. This term is misleading and is the opposite of what it claims to be.

Having previously worked in right to work states such as Arizona and Virginia I can tell you first hand that this legislation is detrimental to any worker. The majority of the RTW states are still stuck at the federal minimum wage, which we all know is not a sustainable wage. Even my union wages in AZ were significantly lower than Maryland. 12 of the 15 states with the worst pay gap between men and women are RTW states. RTW states have a 36% higher than the average number of discrimination charges filed with the EEOC.

This type of legislation is incredibly bad for the worker in Maryland who is trying to provide for their family. It is exponentially bad due to the fact our industries (Film, TV, Live Entertainment, Trade Shows) are hardest hit by the current Covid-19 pandemic and most work has dried up, with only very few projects opening back up. To introduce this type of detrimental legislation to hard working people, to me, is a slap in the face.

I urge legislators voting on this bill to vote AGAINST HB1321 and stand in opposition to this bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kevin Devogel', written in a cursive style.

Kevin Devogel

March 5, 2021

Dereck E. Davis, Chair

Kathleen M. Dumais, Vice Chair

House Economic Matters Committee

6 Bladen Street

Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Members of the Economic Matters Committee,

I write to **oppose HB 1321**, the so called “right” to work bill, which this Committee has considered many times before, and which this Committee has rejected an equal number of times.

“Right-to-work” laws are cleverly marketed as a protection of individual rights to strike out on their own in the workplace, free to find a job and negotiate higher pay and benefits for themselves, without any constraints from others in their workplace.

However, the federal government already protects workers’ freedom not to join a union. Workers can decide to opt out of membership at a unionized workplace and pay a reduced fee that covers the costs the union pays to negotiate for wages and benefits and represent an employee if they have a problem at work. Opponents of unions frequently claim that workers who decline to join a union are still legally required to support that union’s political activities. This is simply not true.

At their heart, right-to-work laws empower employers to undermine worker’s right to collective bargaining and the improved wage, hours and working conditions conferred by union membership.

And it’s not just the individual, or the individual work place, that suffers. Study after study has shown that almost every quality of life metric declines in right-to-work states. Median income in right-to-work state are lower. There are more low-wage occupations in right-to-work states. There are higher job fatalities in right-to-work states. There are higher uninsured rates in right-to-work states. There is less investment in education in right-to-work states. There is higher infant mortality in right-to-work states. And the overall poverty rate is higher in right-to-work states.

Maryland has always prided itself on the quality of life it provides to its citizens. Please do not erode our rights or our life quality by passing this unnecessary legislation.

With best regards,

Rev. Dr. Michael P. Szpak, retired

Baltimore Washington Conference

United Methodist Church



March 5, 2021

Subject: Opposition to HB 1321 (Right to Work bill)

Dear members of the House Economic Matters Committee:

I am writing to you today to express my strong opposition to the House Bill 1321, a Right to Work, (RTW) bill. I have worked in a right to work state during the tenure of my career and have seen and experienced its detrimental effect on workers' rights. I was let go for no reason, no just cause.

It is a terrible thing to go through but it is what happens to workers all the time in so called right to work states. Under such a law management has the right to run roughshod over a worker's pay, working conditions and benefits. Only with a Union are the worker's rights protected. Additionally, right to work states have a 36% higher than the average number of Discrimination charges filed with the EEOC.

At a time when America needs to strengthen Unions more than ever before, this bill seeks to weaken Unions. To do this during a pandemic only makes the situation worse. Workers need health insurance for themselves and their families and this benefit was won by people coming together and collectively bargaining for this benefit.

"Right to Work" is clever branding. Meant to be misleading, Right to Work laws do nothing to increase workers' chances of finding a job, being paid more, and it definitely does not create a right to a job. Right to Work is a political strategy designed to take away rights from workers further rigging the system at the expense of workers in favor of the wealthiest 1%.

The average worker in states with these laws makes \$7,443 a year LESS than workers in other states (\$45,924, compared with \$53,367).

RTW laws endanger safety and health standards that protect workers on the job. RTW laws weaken workers' ability to stand together in order to maintain and strengthen workplace safety and health standards. According to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the rate of workplace deaths is 58% higher in states with these laws.

A recent study of three Midwest right to work states demonstrated there were significant differences between right to work states and collective-bargaining states. Workers in the three right to work states analyzed earned 8% less per hour on average than their counterparts in collective-bargaining states and the median income of a worker was 5.9% less.

As I said before, I have worked in a right to work state and I know firsthand how unfair this law is to hard working employees such as myself. In the Union I now have better pay, job security, Health care benefits, a retirement plan (pension). I also have the satisfaction of knowing that my brother and sisters can collectively bargain with management to preserve these benefits and work together to improve those wages, working conditions and benefits on a regular basis.

I would like to state again my strong opposition to this bill. It is wrong for America, Maryland, and workers in general. We are the lifeblood of the organizations where we work, whether public or private. We deserve the right to come together and fight for our mutual benefit. Thank you for hearing me out on this very important issue.

Sincerely,

Warren R. Pointer
Secretary of the Executive Board of AFSCME Local 1072
Shop Steward