

Testimony
SB 908 – Budget Bill – Appropriations Statement – Memorandum of Understanding for State
Personnel
Finance
March 17, 2021
Support

Good afternoon, my name is Don Hawkins and I am the President of AFSCME Local 3675. We represent the Maryland State Police Civilian Employees.

I personally work in the Aviation Command for the MSP. While we work side by side with our sworn colleagues keeping Maryland safe, my members and co-workers feel the injustice on how our pay and benefits are determined based upon ineffective negotiations.

To put this testimony in context, this is my retirement job, and my way to continue serving my community. I have spent all of my working life (when not in a Marine Corps uniform), on the opposite side of the bargaining table. I have worked companies out of Chapter 11, built and sold three companies, including a defense contracting company. I am quite familiar with the negotiating table, and I am also very familiar with the purpose and value of a union within a large workforce. I have benefitted by fostering and maintaining professional working relationships with the unions that represented my employees.

With the understanding of what can be accomplished through mutual respect, I accepted my position as a Union Local President. I also recently served on AFSCME's bargaining team with the State over the latest contract negotiations. I was shocked, and disappointed to discover that we do not have a professional working relationship between Management and Labor in the State of Maryland.

The relationship that currently exists does not foster a climate for successful negotiations. It starts late, it drags out with an inordinate amount of time focused on petty issues, leaving little time to focus on serious hour, wages, terms and conditions issues.

The current negotiation process has no sense of urgency for either party to reach compromises. The current system simply wastes the time of the people tasked to be a part of the effort because it quickly breaks down into emotional exchanges. One side is pleading, with increasing emotions, for the benefit of the workers, and the other side is simply advancing a policy dictated by people who are not sitting at the negotiating table.

This system is not good for management, it's not good for the state workforce, and it's not good for Marylander taxpayers. Management, labor and Maryland taxpayers deserve a process that compels compromise and finality – that's why I am here today in support of binding arbitration and SB 908.