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Sprinkler Fitters

Steam Fitters

Roofers

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Teamsters

Laborers

Bricklayers

Ironworkers

Sheet Metal Workers

Elevator Constructors

Painters

Operating Engineers

Carpenters

February 28, 2024

The Honorable CT Wilson, Chair
The Honorable Brian Crosby, Vice Chair
House Economic Matters Committee
House Office Building Room 231
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

HB 802 - Labor and Employments - Mandatory Meetings on Religious or Political Matters - Employee Attendance and Participation Position - Support

Thank you Chair Wilson and Vice Chair Crosby and members of the House Economic Matters Committee for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of HB 802.

The BDCBT represents 28 construction trade unions across Maryland, Northern Virginia, and the District of Columbia. Combined, our trade unions represent more than 30,000 thousand skilled craft professionals in the construction industry.

BDCBT supports HB 802. It prohibits employers from retaliation against an employee who declines to attend a meeting regarding political or religious matters. Unfortunately, political and religious coercion in the workplace is a growing problem affecting workers from all backgrounds and across the political spectrum. According to the Economic Policy Institute, US employers have tremendous power over worker conduct under current federal laws. Employers can require workers to attend “captive audience” meetings—and force employees to listen to political, religious, or anti-union employer views—*on work time*.

To address this growing threat, six states have enacted laws to protect workers from offensive or unwanted political and religious speech unrelated to job tasks or performance. In addition to Maryland, legislators in more than a dozen states have advanced bills to prohibit employers from threatening, disciplining, firing, or retaliating against workers who refuse to attend mandatory workplace meetings focused on communicating opinions on political or religious matters. Given that 2024 is a pivotal election year, now is the time for Maryland to pass the Captive Audience Meetings Act. We urge the committee to issue a favorable report on HB 802.

Greg Akerman
President

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