



House Bill 802

Mandatory Meetings on Religious or Political Matters - Employee Attendance and Participation

February 28, 2024

POSITION: Oppose

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Economic Matters Committee:

The *Restaurant Association of Maryland* opposes House Bill 802.

We are concerned that the scope of this legislation goes far beyond discussion of typical religious or political matters. The bill's definition of "political matters" also broadly includes proposals to change legislation, regulations or public policy, and the decision to join or support a civic, community, fraternal, or labor organization. This legislation would prohibit employers from communicating their opinions on these matters during an employer-sponsored meeting that may cover a broad range of issues related to business operations or employment, or are otherwise warranted. The reasons for this bill are unclear and the language is overly broad and vague.

Foodservice industry employers often have pre-shift or other staff meetings where a variety of issues may be discussed. During the COVID pandemic, for example, numerous public policy and regulatory issues were discussed during mandatory staff meetings and employer opinions on various issues were likely shared. Employers also sometimes discuss changes in policies that are necessary to comply with laws, regulations, or for other reasons. The opinion of the employer may also be communicated during such meetings.

If there is a specific labor and employment-related issue that should be debated, then proposed legislation should be drafted to address that issue more narrowly for legislative debate. But the broad and vague nature of this legislation's restrictions on employer communication during employer-sponsored meetings seems unjustified.

For these reasons, we oppose this legislation and request an unfavorable report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Melvin R. Thompson".

Melvin R. Thompson
Senior Vice President