

BILL NO: House Bill 339
TITLE: Maryland Unemployment Insurance – Disqualification – Stoppage of Work
Caused by Labor Dispute
COMMITTEE: Economic Matters
HEARING DATE: February 14, 2024
POSITION: **SUPPORT**

Currently, with very few exceptions, Maryland workers who are not working due to a labor dispute are disqualified from receiving unemployment benefits. House Bill 339 seeks to limit this disqualification to a time period of fourteen (14) days.

Unions have played an essential role in improving employee pay and benefits. A recent report by the U.S. Department of the Treasury found that unions not only raise the wages and improve the benefits of unions members, but these improvements spill over into non-unionized workplaces and contribute to the growth of the U.S. economy. Unions promote egalitarian wage-setting practices and studies have shown that unions have closed race and gender gaps in wages.¹

A work stoppage is very extreme, albeit effective, tool used by unions bargaining with employers. Work stoppages of over 14-days do not represent the majority of strikes by union workers. The bulk of work stoppages in recent years have been less than 10-days in duration. In Maryland, there were only 15 strikes in 2021 and 2022 combined, and of these approximately 5 were of more than 10-days in duration. The top two demands for which a work stoppage occurred during bargaining were related to worker pay and health and safety.²

Women are under-represented in management positions and for women of color the number is much smaller.³ Women are more likely to be in non-management positions and thus more likely to be in the group of workers for whom unions are bargaining. Women would also be economically harmed by going without any income for more than 14-days. This bill will support women and their families in Maryland and as such, the Women's Law Center of Maryland, Inc. urges a favorable report on House Bill 339.

The Women's Law Center of Maryland is a non-profit legal services organization whose mission is to ensure the physical safety, economic security, and bodily autonomy of women in Maryland. Our mission is advanced through direct legal services, information and referral hotlines, and statewide advocacy.

¹ "Labor Unions and the Middle Class," U.S. Dept. of the Treasury, August 2023. <https://home.treasury.gov/system/files/136/Labor-Unions-And-The-Middle-Class.pdf>

² Cornell University, School of Industrial and Labor Relations (ILR) Labor Action Tracker 2022. <https://www.ilr.cornell.edu/faculty-and-research/labor-action-tracker-2022>

³ "Women in the Workplace 2023," McKinsey & Company and LeanIn.org. <https://leanin.org/women-in-the-workplace#key-findings-2023>