

Good afternoon, Chair Ben Barnes, Vice Chair Mark Chang, and esteemed members of the Appropriations Committee.

My name is Liza Smith, and I represent District 14 on the Montgomery County Democratic Central Committee. I am a proud member of Unite Here Local 25 and a single mother. I am here to express my strong support for House Bill - HB0037, sponsored by Delegate Joe Vogel. This bill is a crucial step towards recognizing the fundamental rights of every person employed in the State of Maryland to organize and collectively bargain on matters concerning compensation, hours, and other terms and conditions of employment.

As a union member, I have experienced firsthand the transformative power of collective bargaining. Working at a union job has been a lifeline for me and my son, providing us with a living wage and essential health benefits. These benefits have not only ensured our financial stability but have also given us a sense of security and dignity in our lives.

Academic studies and labor reports consistently highlight the positive impact of unionization on women in the workforce. According to a study by the Institute for Women's Policy Research, unionized women earn higher wages, receive better benefits, and are more likely to have job security compared to their non-union counterparts. Furthermore,

government statistics show that unionized women are better equipped to negotiate fair pay, safe working conditions, and family-friendly policies that benefit not only themselves but also their families.

House Bill - HB0037 is a crucial step towards empowering women in the workforce, particularly single mothers like myself, to secure fair wages, benefits, and working conditions through collective bargaining. By enshrining the right to organize in Maryland law, this bill will ensure that women have a seat at the table when decisions about their livelihoods are being made.

I urge the Appropriations Committee to support House Bill - HB0037 and help create a more just and equitable labor landscape for all workers in Maryland. Thank you for your time and consideration.