



Testimony - HB 37, Declaration of Rights - Right to Organize
Favorable

House Appropriations Committee

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Honorable Chairman Barnes and Members of the House Appropriations Committee:

SEIU Local 500 expresses our strong support for House Bill 37, which proposes an amendment to the Maryland state constitution to guarantee the right to collective bargaining for all workers in the state of Maryland.

SEIU Local 500 members comprise over 23,000 thousand workers in our state who care for Marylanders from cradle to career. Our members stand firm in their commitment to advancing fairness, justice, and dignity in the workplace. For years, we have witnessed firsthand the critical role that collective bargaining plays in improving working conditions, securing fair wages, and ensuring that workers have a voice in the decisions that affect their livelihoods. The right to organize and collectively negotiate terms of employment is foundational to our democracy and essential for the protection of workers' rights.

And yet, it seems that each year we are having to come before this Assembly to plead the case as to why one group of workers deserve collective bargaining rights. Piecemealing enfranchisement of rights is not just obtuse, it is bad public policy.

This constitutional amendment will enshrine in Maryland's constitution a guarantee that every worker—regardless of industry or job type—can organize, negotiate, and advocate for their interests without fear of retaliation or discrimination. It provides legal protections for workers to engage in collective bargaining, ensuring that working people have the tools they need to advocate for themselves and their families.

Why House Bill 37 Matters:

1. **Equity and Justice for All Workers:** In many industries, especially among low-wage workers, the right to bargain collectively remains elusive. By allowing the voters to decide on this important matter, Marylanders can help level the playing field, giving all workers, from teachers and healthcare providers to service workers and beyond, the ability to join together and secure fair wages, benefits, and safe working conditions.
2. **Economic Security for Maryland Families:** Collective bargaining has proven to be a powerful tool for raising wages and improving benefits. This directly impacts the economic security of families across Maryland, reducing poverty and income inequality. As workers are empowered to negotiate, they are better able to provide for themselves and their communities.
3. **A Stronger Economy:** Strengthening the rights of working people strengthens the economy as a whole. When workers have better wages and benefits, they have more disposable income, which in turn supports local businesses and communities. A healthier, more robust economy benefits everyone.
4. **Protecting Workers' Rights for the Future:** Enshrining the right to collective bargaining in Maryland's constitution ensures that future generations of workers will have access to the same rights and protections. It creates a lasting framework for labor rights in our state that can withstand political shifts and evolving workplace dynamics.

We believe that this amendment will not only affirm Maryland's commitment to fairness, equality, and worker dignity, but it will also ensure that the voice of working people remains central to the policies that affect them. The passage of this bill shows your leadership to be bold in moving forward towards building a stronger, more just Maryland for all.

And if you have doubts, if this body lacks the expertise, or the political will to make such robust progress, then allow the people of this state, your constituents to decide at the ballot box. Marylanders are among the best of us in this nation, and they will make their voices heard. You need just take this first step.

On behalf of SEIU Local 500 and our members, we urge this committee to advance this issue to the voters and provide a favorable committee report. Be bold in your leadership and ensure that every worker in Maryland has the right to collectively bargain for a better future.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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