



Testimony - HB 159, Arbitration Reform for State Employees Act of 2025
Favorable
House Appropriations Committee
February 4, 2025
Christopher C. Cano, MPA
Director of Political & Legislative Affairs on Behalf of SEIU Local 500

Honorable Chairman Barnes & Members of the House Appropriations Committee:

As a public sector union of over 23,000 workers from varying careers, we know collective bargaining negotiations do not always conclude expeditiously. Improving working conditions is not always a process where consensus is reached by both parties. In the private sector, negotiations can take months or even extend years. This drawn out process of negotiations does not work in the public sector. Occupational readiness, morale, and tax dollars are all casualties when negotiations can't be reached in public sector negotiations. Binding arbitration ensures both parties reach agreement through a neutral third party. We at SEIU Local 500 express our strong support for the Maryland Arbitration Reform for State Employees Act of 2025. This bill represents a critical step forward in ensuring fair, transparent, and equitable dispute resolution processes for state employees, and I believe it will have a lasting, positive impact on both state workers and the broader Maryland workforce.

One of the key strengths of this legislation is its commitment to creating a more balanced system for resolving disputes. Under the current framework, employees may feel at a disadvantage when engaging in arbitration due to procedural biases or a lack of transparency. By instituting clear guidelines and standards for arbitration proceedings, the Maryland Arbitration Reform Act ensures that employees will have a fairer opportunity to present their cases and receive equitable outcomes.

The bill also strengthens the protections for workers by mandating that arbitration proceedings be conducted with an emphasis on impartiality. This is especially important as it promotes a system in which workers' rights are respected and upheld, helping to reduce the power imbalance that can sometimes favor employers in arbitration settings.

This reform aligns with best practices and modern standards in labor relations, ensuring that Maryland remains a leader in promoting fairness for all workers.

Moreover, the bill enhances efficiency in resolving disputes. By providing a more streamlined and consistent approach to arbitration, both state employees and the state itself can avoid prolonged litigation and the associated costs, leading to more timely resolutions and reduced strain on the judicial system.

I urge you to support this legislation, as it reflects a commitment to improving the working conditions for Maryland's dedicated state employees while safeguarding fairness and transparency in the resolution of employment disputes.

We ask you to support HB 159 and pass it out of this committee with a favorable vote.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Christopher C. Cano, MPA
Director of Political & Legislative Affairs
SEIU Local 500