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HB37: Declaration of Rights – Right to Organize

Hearing before the House Appropriations Committee, Jan 28, 2025

Position: FAVORABLE

The Public Justice Center (PJC) is a not-for-profit civil rights and anti-poverty legal services organization that seeks to advance social justice, economic and racial equity, and fundamental human rights in Maryland. Our Workplace Justice Project works to expand and enforce the right of low-wage workers to receive an honest day's pay for an honest day's work. **The PJC supports HB37, which would protect the fundamental right to organize and bargain collectively by enshrining this right in Maryland's Constitution.** Because unions are better for workers and better for the economy, the PJC supports this bill.

When workers unionize, their wages and working conditions improve.

- The wages of nonunion workers are only 86% of union members' wages.¹
- Union workers have increased access to healthcare, paid sick leave, and retirement plans than nonunion workers.²
- Unionization promotes safer working conditions because employees have more of an opportunity to voice safety concerns.³

Unions help the economy.

- Workers who earn a living wage and health benefits from their employer are less likely to need to rely on the government for support.⁴
- Overall, unions strengthen the middle class and grow the economy.⁵

Maryland's General Assembly has a strong history of protecting and advancing labor rights, including the recent passage of HB984 in 2023, which streamlined the State's rules and procedures regarding

¹ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Union Members – 2023 (January 23, 2024).

² See Economic Policy Institute, Workers Want Unions, but the Latest Data Point to Obstacles in their Path (January 23, 2024) www.epi.org/publication/union-membership-data.

³ *Id.*

⁴ Sojourner & Pacas, The Relationship between Union Membership and Net Fiscal Impact (January 17, 2018).

⁵ U.S. Department of the Treasury, Labor Unions and the Middle Class (August 2023) <https://home.treasury.gov/system/files/136/Labor-Unions-And-The-Middle-Class.pdf>.

collective bargaining by public employees, and HB609 in 2024, which established a collective bargaining process for employees of public libraries throughout the State. The PJC believes **HB37** is another critical step in the right direction to ensure all Maryland workers have the option of unionizing to improve their working and living conditions.

For the foregoing reasons, the PJC **SUPPORTS HB37** and urges a **FAVORABLE** report. Should you have any questions, please call Amy Gellatly, an attorney in the PJC's Workplace Justice Project, at (410) 400-6943.