

**Written Testimony to the Maryland House Appropriations Committee
HB 37 - Declaration of Rights - Right to Organize
January 28, 2025**

FAVORABLE

Chair Barnes and Members of the Committee, AFT Maryland supports HB 37, which seeks to establish the fundamental right of every person employed in Maryland to organize and bargain collectively.

The right to collective bargaining is a cornerstone of a just and equitable society. It is the foundation upon which workers can secure fair compensation, safe working conditions, reasonable hours, and a voice in their workplace. By enshrining this right in the Maryland Constitution, we affirm the dignity of workers and acknowledge their vital contributions to the economy and the community.

Collective bargaining is directly linked to economic equity. According to numerous studies, unionized workers earn higher wages and are more likely to receive essential benefits such as healthcare and retirement plans than their non-union counterparts. This is particularly significant for workers in historically marginalized communities, including women and people of color, who often face systemic inequities in the workplace.

The proposed constitutional amendment aligns Maryland with core American values of fairness, democracy, and freedom. The National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) established these principles at the federal level nearly a century ago, yet gaps in coverage and enforcement have left many workers vulnerable. HB 37 ensures that Maryland takes proactive steps to fill these gaps and lead by example in safeguarding workers' rights.

By passing HB 37, Maryland will join the ranks of states leading the charge for worker empowerment and economic justice. This legislation is not just about protecting workers today; it is about creating a legacy of fairness and equity for future generations.

AFT-Maryland respectfully urges the Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 37. Thank you for your time and consideration.

