



Testimony - SJ0001, Ratifying the Federal Child Labor Amendment
Favorable
Senate Finance Committee
January 22, 2025
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Honorable Chairwoman Biedle & Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

We at SEIU Local 500 stand in strong support of Maryland's ratification of the Child Labor Amendment to the United States Constitution. This historic amendment represents a critical step in ensuring that no child in this nation is exploited in the workforce and that their right to a safe, healthy, and fulfilling childhood is preserved and protected by law.

For generations, child labor has been a dark chapter in America's history. Though significant progress has been made in addressing this issue through labor laws and protections, it remains essential to embed these protections at the highest level of our legal framework—the Constitution. The Child Labor Amendment would guarantee that Congress has the authority to establish uniform, nationwide standards to protect children from exploitative labor practices, no matter where they live.

Maryland has a proud tradition of advocating for the rights and well-being of children. From our education system to our labor laws, we have consistently recognized the importance of giving children the opportunity to grow, learn, and thrive. Ratifying the Child Labor Amendment would be an extension of that commitment and a powerful statement that Maryland values its children and their futures.

While many states have made strides in protecting children from harmful labor practices, gaps still exist. There are instances where children continue to be subjected to unsafe working conditions, long hours, and work that interferes with their education. This is not just a moral issue—it is a matter of fairness and justice for every child in our country. By ratifying this amendment, Maryland will help ensure that child labor laws are

uniformly enforced across the United States, providing greater consistency and protection for all children, regardless of state lines.

Moreover, the amendment would allow Congress to respond more effectively to changes in the economy, new industries, or evolving labor practices. It would give lawmakers the flexibility to craft laws that adapt to emerging challenges while maintaining a strong commitment to ending child labor once and for all.

As we consider the future of our children, we must act to protect their rights and opportunities. By ratifying the Child Labor Amendment, Maryland would join a national effort to safeguard the innocence of childhood, to ensure that no child is put to work in a way that hinders their growth, education, or well-being.

This is not just about ensuring fair labor practices—it is about affirming that every child has the right to a safe and nurturing environment where they can pursue their dreams, grow into productive adults, and contribute to society in meaningful ways. Child labor robs children of this fundamental right, and it is our collective responsibility to take action to prevent it.

We urge the members of the Maryland General Assembly to ratify the Child Labor Amendment, demonstrating our continued commitment to the protection of children and to ensuring that future generations will have the opportunity to live free from the burdens of child labor.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

We ask you to support SJ 0001 and pass it out of this committee with a favorable vote.

Thank you,

Christopher C. Cano, MPA
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SEIU Local 500