



Testimony - SB 976, Collective Bargaining - Local Government Employees and Public  
Employee Relations Act  
Favorable  
Senate Finance Committee  
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Honorable Chairwoman Beidle and Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

SEIU Local 500, as one of Maryland's largest public sector unions representing over 23,000 workers, expresses our strong support for Senate Bill 976, the **Local Government Employees and Public Employee Relations Act**. This critical piece of legislation represents a significant step toward improving fair labor practices, improving workplace conditions, and fostering productive relationships between public employees and their employers.

Public employees play a critical role in maintaining the well-being of our communities. They provide essential services, including public safety, sanitation, transportation, and administrative support, all of which are foundational to the functioning of our local governments. However, many of these dedicated workers lack meaningful collective bargaining rights, leaving them vulnerable to inconsistent employment policies, inadequate wages, and limited avenues for addressing workplace concerns.

Senate Bill 976 introduces key provisions that will bring much-needed fairness and structure to labor relations at the local government level. Specifically, the bill:

1. **Establishes Collective Bargaining Rights** – It ensures that local government employees have the ability to negotiate wages, hours, and working conditions through authorized representatives.
2. **Creates Impasse Procedures with Binding Arbitration** – By including an arbitration process for dispute resolution, the bill promotes fair negotiations and prevents prolonged labor disputes that can disrupt public services.

3. **Maintains Local Control with Statewide Standards** – While allowing counties and municipalities to adopt local labor laws, the bill also ensures that those laws comply with statewide labor standards, fostering consistency and fairness.
4. **Enhances Transparency and Accountability** – Requiring public employers to submit collective bargaining agreements for public record strengthens accountability and encourages responsible governance.

The ability to collectively bargain is a fundamental right that provides workers with a voice in their workplace and leads to improved working conditions, higher job satisfaction, and better service delivery for the public. States and municipalities that have implemented robust collective bargaining frameworks have demonstrated that these policies lead to more stable and efficient labor relations.

Furthermore, Senate Bill 976 respects the rights of both employees and employers by establishing a structured, transparent, and fair negotiation process. It prevents any single party from having undue leverage while ensuring that employees have the representation they need to advocate for their well-being.

We urge the members of the Senate Finance Committee to support Senate Bill 976 and vote in favor of its passage. By doing so, you will be taking a significant step toward ensuring that Maryland's public employees receive the fair treatment and protections they deserve.

We appreciate Senator Lam's leadership on this critical issue and look forward to your support of this important legislation.

Thank you for your time and consideration

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