

Journeyman Pipe Fitters and Apprentices



Local Union No. 602

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AFFILIATED WITH AFL-CIO

Testimony of Chris Madello

Business Manager / Financial Secretary Treasurer, UA Steamfitters Local 602

Before the House Health and Government Operations Committee and the Senate Finance Committee

In Opposition to HB 321 / SB 303

Dear Chair Peña-Melnyk, Chair Beidle, and Honorable Members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee and the Senate Finance Committee:

On behalf of UA Steamfitters Local 602, our more than 5,000 Journeymen, Apprentices, and Helpers, and approximately 200 signatory contractors under the Mechanical Contractors Association of Metro Washington, I write today to express our strongest opposition to House Bill 321 and Senate Bill 303. These bills pose a direct and significant threat to the healthcare benefits relied upon by thousands of union members and working families throughout Maryland.

Employer-sponsored healthcare plans are the backbone of our health system, covering 56% of Marylanders, including public servants such as police, firefighters, teachers, and union workers. The proposed legislation undermines the accessibility and affordability of these benefits, threatening the well-being of hard-working Marylanders and their families. For decades, unions like ours have fought to secure comprehensive, affordable healthcare benefits for our members. HB 321 and SB 303 jeopardize that progress.

Increased Costs for Working Families

HB 321 and SB 303 will drive up healthcare costs, including co-pays, co-insurance rates, and prescription drug prices. Working families already face economic challenges; this legislation will only compound their struggles. The financial strain on hard-working Marylanders could hinder their access to essential healthcare services, leaving families vulnerable to rising costs and reduced care.

Erosion of Employer-Sponsored Healthcare

The bills strip essential protections provided by the federal Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA), which ensures affordable and uniform healthcare coverage. Weakening these protections will destabilize the employer-sponsored healthcare system, leading to increased costs for both employers and employees. By undermining ERISA protections, HB 321 and SB 303 create unnecessary uncertainty and complexity for businesses and their employees.

Negative Impact on Public Servants and Union Workers

Public servants and union members—the people who keep Maryland safe, educated, and operational—deserve better than legislation that threatens their healthcare security. Accessible, affordable healthcare is vital to recruiting and retaining a skilled workforce. As a union representing

highly skilled tradespeople, we know firsthand the importance of strong healthcare benefits in supporting our members and their families.

Undermining Maryland's Economic Health

Employer-sponsored healthcare plans are a critical component of Maryland's economic framework. HB 321 and SB 303 risk increasing healthcare costs by billions of dollars over the next decade, imposing financial burdens on both employers and employees. This financial strain could lead to reduced benefits, layoffs, and diminished economic productivity, ultimately harming Maryland's economic stability.

Conclusion

These bills prioritize the interests of entities seeking to increase healthcare profits at the expense of Maryland families. As a representative of UA Steamfitters Local 602, I urge the committees to reject this harmful legislation. Instead, we should focus on policies that protect and strengthen employer-sponsored healthcare, ensuring it remains affordable and accessible for generations to come.

Thank you for your consideration, and I respectfully urge an unfavorable report on HB 321 and SB 303. Please stand with Maryland's working families and vote NO.

Sincerely,

Christopher M. Madello

Chris Madello
Business Manager / Financial Secretary Treasurer
UA Steamfitters Local 602