

**Written Testimony to the Maryland House Judiciary Committee  
HB 434 - Courts - Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation  
February 12, 2025**

**SUPPORT**

Chair Clippinger and members of the Committee, AFT-Maryland asks for a favorable report on HB 434, legislation that would provide necessary protections from the abusive use of lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs), particularly those targeting unions.

SLAPP suits are a baseless and dangerous tool used by employers to exploit the legal system and suppress union activism, silence workers who are exercising their right to organize, bargain collectively, and advocate for better workplace conditions. These lawsuits are often not filed with the expectation of winning on the merits but rather as a means of imposing financial and legal burdens on unions.

Employers often use allegations of defamation, interference with contracts, and, in extreme cases, claims under the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO) to frame unions as engaging in unlawful conduct.

When unions face the threat of relentless litigation, workers may become hesitant to organize or take collective action. The result is a weakened labor movement and a loss of hard-fought workplace protections.

HB 434 will ensure that unions and other advocacy organizations can efficiently challenge and dismiss SLAPP suits before they become excessively burdensome. A strong anti-SLAPP statute would also deter employers from filing these retaliatory lawsuits in the first place.

By providing a mechanism to dismiss frivolous claims early in the legal process and allowing defendants to recover attorney's fees, this bill protects the US Constitutional rights of unions and workers to engage in public advocacy without fear of financial ruin.

HB 434 is a critical step in safeguarding the rights of unions and their members from exploitative legal tactics designed to silence them. Maryland must take a stand against these abusive lawsuits and ensure that workers can organize and advocate without intimidation. I urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 434 and protect the rights of workers and unions across the state.



