



International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers

CHRISTOPHER M. CASH: Business Manager • THOMAS C. MYERS: President • RICHARD D. WILKINSON: Vice President
WILLIAM T. NG: Financial Secretary • RICHARD G. MURPHY: Recording Secretary • MARK F. PONTELLO: Treasurer



HB 188- Unemployment Insurance Modernization Act of 2026 House Economic Matters Committee February 11, 2026 SUPPORT

TO: Chair Valderrama, Vice Chair Charkoudian, Members of the House Economic Matters Committee

FROM: Tom Clark, Political Director, Intl' Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 26

Madame Chair, Madame Vice Chair and Members of the Committee, thank you for hearing this bill, which will update the Unemployment Insurance system and aid Maryland workers when they are in between jobs. It's during this time that our fellow citizens need a financial bridge to aid them and their dependents. For this reason and more, I wholeheartedly **support HB 188.**

The title of this bill appropriately uses the word modernization. The benefits portion of Maryland's Unemployment Insurance system has not been adjusted in 16 years. We can all admit the cost of living has drastically changed since 2010. Therefore, adjusting the benefits and how they are accrued is rightfully in your hands and understandably looking for your support to modernize the system.

HB 188 addresses how employers pay UI taxes, this rate has been frozen since 1992. The "new wage -indexed system" will have the Department of Labor calculating the State average annual wage each year. Each year, the rate will stay in step with the economy. This bill also alters the rate of weekly benefits, for our residents during a temporary time of need. The goal is to reach a maximum of 40% of the average weekly wage. **Please** let that sink in. The sponsors of this bill want to attain **only** 40% of the average weekly wage, for our most vulnerable, ready-to-work citizens. People like our federal workers that have been laid off, through no fault of their own. Construction workers that often face a reduction in force, for maybe a week or two, for weather reasons or supply demands. These fellow Marylanders only seek appropriate, reasonable financial aid, while they are searching for and securing permanent employment.

For these reasons and the fact that the UI system is woefully stuck in the past, I ask that you join with me in full **support of HB 188.** Thank you





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