



Testimony - SB 646, Public School System Contracts - Prohibited Provisions
Favorable w/ Amendments
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
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Honorable Chairman Feldman & Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

The members of SEIU Local 500 support Senate Bill 646, with clarifying amendments to ensure strong protections for public schools and the workers who serve Maryland students.

This legislation provides important safeguards to prevent public school systems from being forced into unfair or fiscally irresponsible contractual provisions. School systems should not be required to indemnify private vendors without appropriated funds, waive their right to proper venue in Maryland courts, agree to binding arbitration outside statutory frameworks, or accept automatic renewals that obligate future funding without legislative approval.

These protections are especially important as school systems increasingly contract for technology platforms, transportation services, food services, and other operational supports. Without guardrails, districts can be locked into agreements that undermine fiscal accountability and limit public oversight.

We strongly support the amended language clarifying that this section does not apply to collective bargaining agreements entered into under Titles 6 and 9.5 of the Education Article or Title 22 of the State Government Article. Preserving collectively bargained rights is essential and must remain explicit.

To further strengthen the bill, SEIU Local 500 recommends the following amendments:

1. Clarify Preservation of Collective Bargaining Rights

Add language explicitly stating that nothing in this section may be construed to limit, alter, or impair rights and obligations under existing or future collective bargaining agreements. This ensures no unintended interference with negotiated grievance and arbitration procedures established under Maryland labor law.

2. Ensure Transparency and Public Reporting

Require public school systems to publicly report any contract provision found void under this section and the corrective action taken. Transparency promotes accountability and deters the inclusion of prohibited provisions.

3. Strengthen Worker Protection in Contracting

Add language requiring that contracts subject to this section may not include provisions that restrict compliance with state labor standards, wage laws, or worker safety requirements. Public contracting should reinforce — not weaken — Maryland’s labor protections.

Senate Bill 646 takes an important step toward protecting taxpayer dollars, preserving local control, and ensuring school systems are not pressured into unfair contractual terms.

With the proposed amendments, this bill will both strengthen fiscal responsibility and safeguard workers’ rights.

SEIU Local 500 respectfully urges a favorable report with amendments.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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