

SB0417_RichardKaplowitz_FAV

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Richard Keith Kaplowitz

Frederick, MD 21703

TESTIMONY ON SB#0417 POSITION: FAVORABLE

Labor and Employment - Mandatory Meetings on Religious or Political Matters - Employee Attendance and Participation (Maryland Worker Freedom Act)

TO: Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes, and members of the Finance Committee

FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard Keith Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB#/0417, **Labor and Employment - Mandatory Meetings on Religious or Political Matters - Employee Attendance and Participation (Maryland Worker Freedom Act)**

This bill is being submitted to protect workers rights as determined in the [National Labor Relations Bureau] *NLRB Bans Mandatory 'Captive Audience' Meetings* guidance. ¹

Mandatory employer meetings about companies' positions on unions violate the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA), the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) ruled on Nov. 13.... The board articulated several reasons why mandatory "captive-audience" meetings were deemed to interfere with employees' rights under the act. First, the NLRB determined that such meetings interfere with an employee's right under the NLRA to freely decide whether, when, and how to participate in a debate concerning union representation. Second, captive-audience meetings provide a mechanism for an employer to unlawfully observe and surveil employees as it addresses the exercise of employees' NLRA rights, according to the NLRB. Third, the board determined that an employer's ability to compel attendance at such meetings on pain of discipline or discharge lends a coercive character to the message regarding unionization.

Religion-centered meetings by employers which require attendance are also forbidden. ²

Employers cannot force employees to attend religious events or meetings, as this violates Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which requires reasonable accommodation for religious beliefs. Forcing participation constitutes religious discrimination and harassment

Actions being taken by the Federal Administration towards control of the NLRB and possible overturning of labor protections could reverse this decision.

¹ <https://www.shrm.org/topics-tools/employment-law-compliance/nlr-bans-mandatory--captive-audience--meetings>

² Google AI Search "forced attendance at employer-sponsored religious events"

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The bill will prohibit employers and their agents, representatives, and designees from taking certain actions against an employee or applicant for employment because the employee or applicant takes certain actions regarding employer-sponsored meetings during which the employer communicates the opinion of the employer regarding religious matters or political matters; authorizing an employee to file a certain complaint with the Commissioner of Labor and Industry; etc.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB#/0417.