

**SB 831 – Labor Law – Child Labor Penalties, Private Sector Employee Labor Relations,
and State Employee Labor Standards**

Testimony of Senate President Bill Ferguson

On March 11, 2026

Before the Senate Finance Committee

Why This Bill Matters:

Protecting Maryland workers is essential to maintain a healthy middle class, in which people can provide for their families and participate in the workforce freely. Unfortunately, there have been various attacks on worker protections and labor unions. Project 2025 – a blueprint for restructuring the federal executive branch in a way that harms Marylanders’ rights, support, and access to resources – outlines several actions to undermine worker rights and protections. Specifically, Project 2025 recommends several actions regarding labor, including the following:

- ending the U.S. Department of Labor’s hazard-order regulations to allow teenage workers to work in regulated jobs if a parent consents and with additional trainings; and
- reintroducing and passing the federal Teamwork for Employees and Managers (TEAM) Act of 2022, legislation that would detrimentally alter the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) by creating an “Employee Involvement Organization” (EIO), which is not subject to the enforcement and protections of the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), which enforces the NLRA.

In addition to the Project 2025 recommendations specified above, states such as Florida, Indiana, Kentucky, and West Virginia have passed legislation in the last two years to weaken child labor laws. Proactively standing up for the rights of our workers, especially young people, is critical as we navigate uncertain economic times and opportunities for exploitation increase. Equally as important is ensuring the rights of private-sector laborers in the event the Trump Administration repeals or abandons NLRA.

What This Bill Does:

Senate Bill 831, with the proposed amendments, makes four primary changes, Specifically, the legislation:

- 1) Increases the State penalties for violating child labor standards to match the current penalties for violating federal child labor laws under the Fair Labor

- Standards Act (FLSA) (generally \$11,000 for each violation and \$50,000 if the violation results in death or serious injury, updated annually for inflation);
- 2) Establishes that the Maryland Public Employee Relations Board (PERB) will stand in for NLRB if Congress repeals NLRA, or the federal government cedes jurisdiction to the states;
 - 3) Prohibits employers from forming EIOs that are not subject to NLRA or under the jurisdiction of NLRB; and
 - 4) Prohibits a unit in the Executive Branch from petitioning or applying to the federal government for a waiver of any federal FLSA provision that is applicable to the unit, even if the waiver is otherwise authorized under federal law.

The proposed amendments address a technical concern of hospitals who may need to form certain committees to maintain accreditation. They also eliminate the overlapping authority of PERB and NLRB under the bill by making the relevant provisions contingent on the repeal of NLRA or the express cession of jurisdiction to the states – instead of being triggered if NLRB fails to take certain actions.

Why You Should Vote for This Bill:

Senate Bill 881 strengthens our labor laws for children and Maryland's workers. Marylanders are counting on the State to step in and provide the protections that may no longer be afforded at the federal level. The legislation does just this by making common sense changes to fill the gaps in our labor protection laws. This will stabilize our economy in the event of drastic changes in labor law at the federal level and ensure Marylanders can continue to participate in the workforce with equitable working conditions.