



Testimony - SB 831, Labor Law - Child Labor Penalties, Private Sector Employee Labor Relations, and State Employee Labor Standards

Favorable

House Government, Labor, and Elections Committee

April 2, 2026

Christopher C. Cano, MPA

Director of Political & Legislative Affairs on behalf of SEIU Local 500

Honorable Chairwoman Wells & Members of the House Government, Labor, and Elections Committee:

This bill comes down to a simple question, what do we do when the systems meant to protect workers stop working?

Because right now, we are seeing it happen.

We are seeing children put into dangerous jobs while employers treat penalties like the cost of doing business. We are seeing companies create so-called “worker organizations” that look like unions—but are really designed to merely give the illusion of a seat at the table in the workplace. And, we are seeing a federal labor system that is too often delayed, gridlocked, or unable to act when workers need it most.

SB 831 says Maryland will not accept that.

First—if a child is exploited, there must be real consequences. This bill strengthens penalties so that violating child labor laws is no longer cheap or easy to ignore.

Second—if workers organize, their voice must be real. This bill closes the door on sham, employer-controlled worker organizations, that exist to undermine genuine worker power, masquerading as if they were unions.

And third—if the federal government fails, workers in Maryland will not lose their rights.

If the National Labor Relations Board cannot act, this bill ensures the State can step in—so organizing efforts don't die in delay, because delays in labor law enforcement don't hurt employers—they hurt workers.

Finally, this bill makes clear that Maryland will not weaken basic labor standards by seeking waivers from federal wage and hour protections.

For our members, this is not abstract. Across the state, we see the impact every day—families struggling with unsafe work, unstable jobs, and systems that don't respond in time.

SB 831 restores something essential, accountability.

Accountability for employers who exploit children. Accountability for those who try to undermine unions. And, accountability when federal systems fall short.

SB 831 reflects Maryland values: strong labor standards, real enforcement, and respect for workers' voices. SEIU Local 500 urges the Committee to advance this legislation and stand with workers across our state by issuing a favorable report.

Thank you for your time and consideration.