



House Bill 45

Labor and Employment - Mandatory Meetings on Religious or Political Matters – Employee Attendance and Participation

February 19, 2026

POSITION: Oppose

Madame Chair and Members of the Government, Labor, and Elections Committee:

The *Restaurant Association of Maryland* opposes House Bill 45.

We are concerned that the scope of this legislation goes far beyond discussion of typical religious or political matters. The bill's definition of "political matters" also broadly includes proposals to change legislation, regulations or public policy, and the decision to join or support a civic, community, fraternal, or labor organization. This legislation would prohibit employers from taking adverse action against employees for failing to attend mandatory staff meetings where opinions of the employer on these matters may be mentioned. Mandatory staff meetings may cover a broad range of issues. The reasons for this bill are unclear and the language is overly broad and vague.

Foodservice industry employers often have pre-shift or other staff meetings where a variety of issues may be discussed, including issues related to business operations or employment. During the COVID pandemic, for example, numerous public policy and regulatory issues were discussed during mandatory staff meetings and employer opinions on various issues were likely shared. Employers also sometimes discuss changes in policies that are necessary to comply with laws and regulations. The opinion of the employer regarding proposals to change legislation or regulations may sometimes be communicated during such mandatory meetings.

If there is a specific labor and employment-related issue that should be debated, then proposed legislation or amendments should be drafted to address that issue more narrowly. But the broad and vague nature of this legislation's restrictions seems unjustified.

For these reasons, we oppose this legislation and request an unfavorable report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Melvin R. Thompson".

Melvin R. Thompson
Senior Vice President