



## MARYLAND STATE & D.C. AFL-CIO

*Affiliated with the National AFL-CIO*

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### **HB 1108 - Labor and Employment - Greenhouse Workers - Collective Bargaining and Heat Protection**

#### **House Government, Labor, and Elections Committee**

**February 26, 2026**

#### **SUPPORT**

**Donna S. Edwards**

#### **Maryland State and DC AFL-CIO**

Madame Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 1108. On behalf of 700 affiliated unions, I offer the following comments.

Collective bargaining is an exercise of freedom and democracy. Collective bargaining unites workers through their union to negotiate as equals with employers, determine wages, hours, leave, safety, and work-life balance. HB 1108 extends these rights to greenhouse workers who have been excluded from these rights for too long.

This legislation gives greenhouse workers the right to organize, to form a union, and to negotiate for the protections they deserve. It also establishes a heat-protection standard to ensure that workers do not suffer heat related injuries.

In 1935, Congress passed the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) establishing employees' rights to join unions and required employers to bargain collectively with unions. But agricultural workers were excluded from the Act. Industrial greenhouses did not exist at the time. Erroneously over time greenhouse workers were swept into a big tent of agricultural workers. As a result, these workers have spent decades without basic rights or a meaningful voice on the job.

Greenhouse work is often misunderstood as another form of agricultural labor. However, greenhouse work is year-round, not seasonal. These workers do not have certain seasons off. They work continuously in fast-paced, physically demanding environments, and are expected to perform their jobs to the highest quality.

Workers have been clear about the challenges they face: low wages, dangerous lack of benefits, and no real opportunities for growth. They also talk about the significant physical



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strain of the job with constant exposure to high temperatures without adequate breaks. When problems arise, they have no recourse. Granting collective bargaining rights would allow these workers to have a formal, reliable process to address unsafe conditions, unfair treatment, and basic needs on the job.

HB 1108 ensures greenhouse workers have a voice in their workplace and the ability to advocate for fair treatment, safe conditions, and a path toward stability.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable vote on HB 1108.



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