



TESTIMONY

COMMITTEE: House Government, Labor, and Elections

DATE: March 5, 2026

POSITION: Favorable with Amendments

BILL: HB 1356

The Maryland Municipal League (MML) supports with amendment House Bill 1356: Labor and Employment - Civic and Related Activities-Protection-Maryland Employee Civic Activity and Lawful Expression Protection Act

The merits of HB 1356 are certainly reasonable and build off the federal Hatch Act by protecting workers who participate in certain civic and political activity from retaliation by their employer. Broadly speaking this is supported by the League.

However, local governments are fundamentally different from private sector employers in that municipal employees regularly interact with, and carry out the policies of, locally elected mayors and councilmembers as part of the scope of their employment. As written, the bill presents opportunities for conflict between a municipal employee participating in a political activity that directly conflicts with an elected official with whom they work.

As such, MML requests the Committee to consider the following amendments to exempt local governments from the provisions of the bill:

Page 2, line 15

(E) “EMPLOYER” INCLUDES:

(1) A UNIT OF STATE ~~OR LOCAL~~ GOVERNMENT; AND

Page 2, line 19 insert:

(F) “EMPLOYER” DOES NOT INCLUDE:

(1) A UNIT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

For these reasons, the League respectfully requests that the committee provide House Bill 1356 with a favorable report, with the above amendments.

For more information relating to this piece of testimony, please contact:

Bill Jorch: Managing Director, Advocacy and Public Policy, billj@mdmunicipal.org

Municipalities in Maryland support 42,000 jobs and provide \$5.2 billion in employee compensation.