

**HB 1173 - State Procurement - Contractors and Vendors - Restrictions on Use of State
Funds and Resources
House Government, Labor, and Elections Committee
March 6, 2026**

SUPPORT

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Madame Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 1173. On behalf of 700 affiliated unions, I offer the following comments.

In 2023, the General Assembly passed HB 984, the Public Employee Relations Act, prohibiting State, county, and municipal agencies from using public dollars to influence employees regarding their decisions to join or support a union. This drew a clear line that public funds cannot be used to pressure workers about their rights. HB 1173 simply extends that same standard to the contractors and vendors who also receive public dollars and perform functions on behalf of the State.

Under current Maryland law, public agencies are barred from using taxpayer dollars for anti-union activity, but contractors and vendors are free to run campaigns that discourage workers organizing. In a very recent instance, disputes erupted in Baltimore City between unionized janitors and a contractor that leases multiple large buildings from the State. Five unfair labor practices cases were filed alleging union-busting, underpaid wages, misclassification, and other blatant violations. These workers provide essential services in State-owned buildings, yet the contractor used its position and public resources to undermine their rights.

In another example, a state-funded employer, Centurion, brought in an outside vendor to conduct what is often known as a “captive audience” meeting. Employees were required to attend during their regular work hours, despite already being understaffed. Once in the room, they were forced to listen to anti-union messaging and not allowed to leave. This strips workers of their rights and uses public dollars to once again, undermine those rights. HB 1173 ensures that Maryland does not pay the tab for these unfair practices.

HB 1173 strengthens Maryland’s accountability in State contracting, protects workers’ rights, and reinforces that public funds must serve public purposes. This is about fairness and transparency and the responsible use of taxpayer dollars.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable vote on HB 1173.