

**Favorable
House Bill 1356
Labor and Employment - Civic and Related Activities – Protection
(Maryland Employee Civic Activity and Lawful Expression Protection Act)**

**Government, Labor, and Elections Committee
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The Maryland State Education Association supports House Bill 1356. This legislation would prohibit employers from taking adverse action against employees for engaging in specific protected actions, unless those actions are directly relevant to job requirements. It also would establish a 120-day "rebuttable presumption" window, meaning adverse actions taken soon after protected activity are assumed to be retaliatory unless proven otherwise.

MSEA represents 76,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools and community colleges, teaching and supporting our almost 900,000 K-12 students so they can pursue their dreams. MSEA represents more than 44 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3-million-member National Education Association (NEA).

House Bill 1356 affords workers the ability to participate, off the clock and out of the workplace, in civic engagements such as free speech, organizing, and assembly without fear of reprisal. Workers must not be forced to choose between job security and their democratic liberties.

This bill strikes a fair balance between employee rights and legitimate employer interests by establishing narrow exceptions for conduct related to job performance, confidentiality, or threats. Critically, it forces employers to justify any exemptions, preventing the erosion of rights through overly broad policies.

We urge the committee to issue a Favorable Report on House Bill 1356.