



Testimony - HB 831, Collective Bargaining - Local Government Employees and Public
Employee Relations Act

Favorable

House Government, Labor, and Elections Committee

March 3, 2026

Terrence Cavanagh on Behalf of SEIU Local 500

Honorable Chairwoman Wells & Members of the House Government, Labor, and
Elections Committee:

SEIU Local 500, which represents thousands of public sector and nonprofit workers
across Maryland, including early childhood educators, school support staff, college
faculty, and other public servants strongly supports House Bill 831.

HB 831 extends collective bargaining rights to public local employees across Maryland
by applying the Maryland Public Employee Relations Act to counties, municipalities, and
certain quasi-governmental entities. Quite simply, this bill ensures that the workers who
keep our counties and municipalities running have the same fundamental freedom of
association and collective bargaining rights already afforded to many other public
employees in our state.

For too long, collective bargaining protections have depended on geography. A worker's
rights should not be determined by their ZIP code. HB 831 creates a consistent
statewide framework while still allowing local governments to adopt compliant local labor
laws that meet or exceed state standards. That balance respects local governance while
ensuring a meaningful floor of rights.

Importantly, the bill establishes clear impasse procedures, including binding arbitration
where appropriate. That structure promotes stability, predictability, and labor peace.
When workers have a fair path to resolve disputes, services continue uninterrupted and
communities benefit.

HB 831 also modernizes the authority of the Public Employee Relations Board, strengthens enforcement of unfair labor practice protections, and ensures existing bargaining relationships remain intact during implementation. These provisions create clarity, transparency, and accountability for both employees and employers.

Collective bargaining is not just about contracts. It is about dignity, retention, and the ability of public servants to advocate for safe staffing, fair wages, and quality public services. When workers have a voice, workplaces are stronger, turnover is reduced, and taxpayers ultimately benefit from a more stable and professional workforce.

SEIU Local 500 believes every public worker deserves the right to organize and bargain collectively, regardless of whether they work for the State, a county, or a municipality. HB 831 moves Maryland closer to that principle of fairness and equity.

SEIU Local 500 respectfully requests a favorable report on HB 831..

SEIU Local 500 respectfully urges a favorable report on House Bill 160. Thank you to Delegates Schindler for championing this issue.

Thank you for your time and consideration.