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[www.seiu32bj.org](http://www.seiu32bj.org)

March 4, 2026

Dear Madam Chair Wells, Vice Chair Kerr, and members of the committee,

Thank you, Madam Chair and members of the Government, Labor, and Elections Committee, for the opportunity to testify today in support of HB 1173, which would prohibit contractors and vendors who receive state funding from using that money on anti-union activities.

SEIU 32BJ represents 185,000 members across 11 states and Washington, D.C., with over 4,000 members in Maryland. Our members provide essential services in public facilities, commercial and residential buildings, airports, and a variety of other locations. 32BJ supports HB 1173 because as an institution, we believe deeply in the right of every worker to choose whether to be represented by a union. When employers engage in anti-union scare tactics, they deprive their workers of the right to a free and fair union election. This strips workers of their voices, and also of the opportunity to improve their working conditions. The financial benefits of union membership for workers are well established.<sup>i</sup>

It is not only workers that benefit from strong unions, but the public at large. Service sectors are vulnerable to high worker turnover rates driven by low wages.<sup>ii</sup> High turnover can have profoundly negative impacts on facility safety: less on-the-job experience may lead to more mistakes, accidents, or overlooked hazards.<sup>iii</sup> 32BJ has long worked to raise standards in the security and janitorial sectors by organizing workers in these sectors and then negotiating collective bargaining agreements that boost wage and benefits levels, improve working conditions, and stabilize the workforce. Union membership is strongly correlated with higher compensation standards.<sup>iv</sup> Higher compensation standards reduce turnover, which results in a more experienced workforce that is better able to maintain high security standards at public facilities.<sup>v</sup>

Unfortunately, collective bargaining standards may be undermined if state contracts reward union-busting contractors. Employers use a range of tactics to bust unions and often spend a lot of money doing it. Data shows that employers are charged with violating federal labor law in over 40% of all union election campaigns, and one out of five union election campaigns involves a charge that a worker was illegally fired in retaliation for union activity.<sup>vi</sup> When anti-union contractors create a race to the bottom by underbidding the responsible contractors that let their employees decide whether to unionize, both workers and the public lose. The proposed legislation is a commonsense reform to the state's procurement practices to address this issue.

Safeguarding workers' right to join a union is not only good for facility safety; it also has the potential to save taxpayers money. Union membership can provide workers with



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dependable medical benefits. In the absence of such benefits, workers often delay and forgo care<sup>vii</sup> which can worsen healthcare outcomes and ultimately increase the cost of uncompensated care that is shouldered by the taxpayer.<sup>viii</sup> And hard-working janitors and security guards also win out when they know they can exercise their right to collectively bargain without risking their jobs.

It's unacceptable that public funds would be used to pay for unfair practices that undermine the hard-won rights of workers to organize. HB 1173 represents a necessary reform to the state's procurement law and has the potential to deliver real benefits to workers, the public, and to the state economy.

Sincerely,

Jaime Contreras,

Southern Regional Director and Executive Vice President

32BJ SEIU

<sup>i</sup> <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/union2.pdf>

<sup>ii</sup> Gallear, Amanda. "The Impact of Wages and Turnover on Security and Safety in Airport." UC Berkeley Labor Center. October 18, 2017. <https://laborcenter.berkeley.edu/pdf/2017/SFO-literature-review.pdf>

<sup>iii</sup> Gallear Amanda, UC Berkeley Labor Center and SFO, The Impact of Wages and Turnover on Security and Safety in Airports: A Review of the Literature, 10/18/17. <https://laborcenter.berkeley.edu/pdf/2017/SFO-literature-review.pdf> Pages 5-6.

<sup>iv</sup> <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/modeling-the-impact-of-sectoral-bargaining-for-u-s-workers/>

<sup>v</sup> Gallear, Amanda. "The Impact of Wages and Turnover on Security and Safety in Airport." UC Berkeley Labor Center. October 18, 2017. <https://laborcenter.berkeley.edu/pdf/2017/SFO-literature-review.pdf>

<sup>vi</sup> EPI. Unlawful: U.S. employers are charged with violating federal law in 41.5% of all union election campaigns. Available at: [https://www.epi.org/publication/unlawful-employer-opposition-to-union-election-campaigns/?mc\\_cid=a9728d1a4c&mc\\_eid=5c18a3c491](https://www.epi.org/publication/unlawful-employer-opposition-to-union-election-campaigns/?mc_cid=a9728d1a4c&mc_eid=5c18a3c491)

<sup>vii</sup> The Commonwealth Fund. The Costs and Consequences of Being Uninsured. Available at: [https://www.commonwealthfund.org/sites/default/files/documents/\\_media\\_files\\_publications\\_in\\_the\\_literature\\_2003\\_jun\\_the\\_costs\\_and\\_consequences\\_of\\_being\\_uninsured\\_davis\\_consequences\\_itl\\_663\\_pdf.pdf](https://www.commonwealthfund.org/sites/default/files/documents/_media_files_publications_in_the_literature_2003_jun_the_costs_and_consequences_of_being_uninsured_davis_consequences_itl_663_pdf.pdf)

<sup>viii</sup> Institute of Medicine (US) Committee on the Consequences of Uninsurance. Washington (DC).

Spending on Health Care for Uninsured Americans: How Much, and Who Pays? Available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK221653/>

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