



Testimony - HB 1480, Labor Law - Child Labor Penalties, Private Sector Employee
Labor Relations, and State Employee Labor Standards
Favorable

House Government, Labor, and Elections Committee

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

HB 1480 is a comprehensive and timely measure that strengthens Maryland's commitment to protecting workers, defending the right to organize, and ensuring that labor standards keep pace with evolving threats to working people's rights. At a moment when federal labor protections are increasingly uncertain, this bill ensures that Maryland does not retreat from its responsibility to uphold fairness, safety, and dignity in the workplace.

First, SEIU Local 500 strongly supports the bill's enhanced enforcement mechanisms and civil penalties for violations of child labor laws. Exploitative and unsafe working conditions for minors are unacceptable. Meaningful penalties—especially for willful or repeated violations—are essential to deterrence and accountability. Maryland must send a clear message that child labor laws will be enforced and that young workers' health, education, and safety are non-negotiable.

Second, HB 1480 protects workers from employer-dominated organizations that undermine genuine collective bargaining. So-called "alternative" or employer-controlled entities dilute workers' voices and weaken democratic representation on the job. This bill ensures that workers retain the right to organize freely and to bargain through legitimate, independent labor organizations—not structures designed to bypass federal labor law protections.

Third, SEIU Local 500 strongly supports the provisions establishing a state-level backstop for private-sector workers when the National Labor Relations Board is unable or unwilling to act. Workers should not lose fundamental rights to organize, bargain collectively, or seek remedies for unfair labor practices due to federal dysfunction, delay, or political interference. Granting the Public Employee Relations Board authority to step in under clearly defined circumstances is a prudent and necessary safeguard for workers' rights.

Finally, the bill's prohibition on state agencies seeking waivers from the federal Fair Labor Standards Act ensures that Maryland will not race to the bottom on wages, overtime, or worker protections. Public employers should lead by example, not seek exemptions from laws designed to protect working people.

HB 1480 reflects Maryland values: strong labor standards, real enforcement, and respect for workers' voices. SEIU Local 500 urges the Committee to advance this legislation and stand with workers across our state by issuing a favorable report.

Thank you for your time and consideration.