



## MARYLAND STATE & D.C. AFL-CIO

*Affiliated with the National AFL-CIO*

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### **HB 1539 - Maryland Labor Relations Act**

#### **House Government, Labor, and Elections Committee**

**March 6, 2026**

**SUPPORT**

**Donna S. Edwards**

#### **Maryland State and DC AFL-CIO**

Madame Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 1539. On behalf of our 700 affiliated unions, I offer the following comments.

This bill ensures that Maryland workers will not lose their right to organize and bargain collectively if federal labor law is ever repealed. It creates a state framework that can protect private-sector workers' rights, establishing an independent Maryland Labor Relations Board with the authority to run elections, resolve bargaining disputes, investigate unfair labor practices, and order remedies when workers lose pay, status, or rights because of violations.

HB 1539 affirms essential rights that allow workers to negotiate for fair and safe workplaces. It guarantees the right to act collectively for: 1) mutual aid, 2) to form or join an employee organization, and 3) to negotiate the terms and conditions of their employment. The legislation also protects workers from retaliation, coercion, surveillance, and discrimination for exercising these rights. Any attempt to interfere with or punish workers for organizing would be considered an unfair labor practice and would be subject to enforcement by the Board. These protections are critical to ensuring that workers can exercise their rights freely and without fear.

While the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) currently governs most of private-sector labor relations, Maryland would not be alone in establishing a state-level framework for private-sector collective bargaining. States such as New York, Massachusetts, Minnesota, California, and Michigan already have their own versions of a "little NLRA" to govern private-sector collective bargaining. These states reaffirm the protections afforded to these workers and Maryland would just be following a proven model if federal protections ever fall away.



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It is important to note that the bill does not disrupt current federal jurisdiction. It simply ensures that the State would be ready if federal protections ever cease to exist—this is a contingency bill. In a time of national uncertainty, Maryland should not leave its workers unprotected. HB 1539 provides fairness and a system that reflects the state’s commitment to worker rights and economic stability.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on HB 1539.



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