

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO H.B. 163---Right to Work

February 4, 2020

TO: Hon. Dereck Davis, Chair, and members of the House Economic Matters Committee

FROM: Marilyn Irwin, President CWA Local 2108

Chairman Davis and House Economic Matters Committee Members,

On behalf of the 1700 CWA members I represent, I am writing to express my deep disappointment in a strong opposition to this poorly-named bill. If enacted, this legislation would destroy the only effective voice Maryland workers have on the job. It's intention is to cut organized labor off at the knees by making it impossible to finance the tough work unions do to represent and protect working people. If America's unions go broke, corporate CEOs can (and will) steamroll over their workers, with no one to stand in their way. Since 1978 the percentage of American workers represented by labor unions has been cut in half. During that same period of time the average pay has increased **997% for CEOs and 10.9% for workers**. This is no coincidence.

AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka explained the dangers of right-to-work bills very well: "**Right-to-work is a lie dressed up in a feel-good slogan**. It doesn't give workers freedom---instead, it weakens our right to join together and bargain for better wages and working conditions. **It's end goal is to destroy unions.**" Numbers don't lie. Workers in states with right-to-work laws have wages that are 12% lower than they are in states without these laws. That's because unions raise wages for all workers, not just our members.

Right-to-work is not the will of the people. It is legislation pushed on working people by corporations that want to ship jobs overseas, cut health and safety protections and lower wages. This is an attempt by corporate CEOs to further tip the scale even more in their favor, at the expense of working people.

Right-to-work laws give workers the option to stop supporting their unions, while still enjoying all of the benefits of union representation and collective bargaining. This is commonly called "free riding". Under U.S. labor law, a union must represent all employees in the workplace it has unionized, even those who may not want to be in a union. It's only fair for all workers (both members and non-members) to contribute financially to help cover the costs of bargaining and representation.

Don't be fooled by this legislation. My members and I will be following the handling of this bill very closely. While many states have adopted right-to-work legislation, **Maryland is better than this**.

Sincerely,