



# MARYLAND STATE & D.C. AFL-CIO

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**SB 177 – Uninsured Employers’ Fund –  
Payments to Former Employees of Bethlehem Steel  
Senate Finance Committee  
January 18, 2022**

**OPPOSE**

**Donna S. Edwards  
President  
Maryland State and DC AFL-CIO**

Madam Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to SB 177 – Uninsured Employers’ Fund – Payments to Former Employees of Bethlehem Steel. My name is Donna S. Edwards, and I am the President of the Maryland State and District of Columbia AFL-CIO. On behalf of the 340,000 union members in the state of Maryland, I offer the following comments.

The last workers at Bethlehem Steel left in 2003 when RG Steel closed up shop, leaving thousands of families out in the cold. Since then, those retired and those forced to leave upon closure have filed for, and received, benefits from the Uninsured Employers’ Fund, for the occupational injuries they have suffered. SB 177 would take those benefits from many of these workers. The bill sets an unrealistic standard of having to prove injury at a workplace that has not only been closed, but has been razed to the ground, over the past 18 years. The workers at Bethlehem Steel already suffered at the hands of a greedy corporation that filed bankruptcy and skipped town. There is no reason to add insult to injury by passing this bill.

**We urge an unfavorable report on SB 177.**



## District 8

**Ernest R. Thompson**  
District Director

**James Strong**  
Assistant to the Director

### **RE: Opposition to SB 177 Uninsured Employers' Fund-Payment to Former Employees of Bethlehem Steel Corporations**

To: The Honorable Senate Finance Chairlady Delores G Kelly and distinguished members of the Finance Committee.

My name is Jim Strong and I am the Assistant to the Director District 8, of the United Steelworkers Union. I want to thank you for this opportunity to submit written opposition to SB 177. Bethlehem Steel and the many subsequent owners were an important part to the economies of Baltimore City and the surrounding counties. Over the years, the union negotiated good wages and excellent benefits on behalf of our members. Unfortunately, the last owner RG Steel filed bankruptcy, closed the doors, totally destroying the livelihoods of thousands of USW members, their families, and the local economy. These employees are still here, and have suffer from injuries incurred while working at one of the largest steel mills in history.

Senate Bill 177 can prevent these workers from having the hearing loss covered by Workers' Compensation. This bill will not only deny future coverage of hearing loss, but would retroactively stop coverage for those who have already begun treatment. The former employees of Bethlehem Steel have suffered enough, without the humiliation of having treatment for hearing loss declined. We ask that the Senate Finance Committee stand up for these workers, and give SB 177 an unfavorable vote. It is the right thing to do.

Thank you,

*James Strong*

James Strong  
Assistant to the Director  
District 8, United Steelworkers

C: USW District 8 Director Ernest R. Thompson, USW District 8 Rapid Response Coordinator  
Chad Conley

United Steel, Paper and Forestry, Rubber, Manufacturing, Energy, Allied Industrial and Service Workers International  
Union