

Testimony from Jonathan Byrd: MI Laborers' District Council

RE: HB 5025

Let me first start by thanking the House Oversight, Reform, and Ethics Committee for allowing me to discuss the very important issue regarding the annual authorization of union dues.

My name is Jonathan Byrd, and I am the Legislative Director for the Michigan Laborers' District Council, which includes seven local unions that represent all 83 counties in Michigan.

In principle, and substantially by detail, the Michigan Laborers' District Council, and the 12,000 Union Construction Laborers we represent, opposes HB 5025, which mandates the annual authorization for the collection of union dues.

As a general principle, the Michigan Laborers' believe that this proposed administrative burden to be placed on the construction industry is unwarranted and threatens to increase costs in what is an already depressed portion of the marketplace.

As it relates specifically to HB 5025, the Michigan Laborers' believe that this legislation does nothing to create jobs in our State.

Our Union takes great pride in being a trade that provides state-of-the-art training to all our Members. Our Training Fund spends millions of dollars every year, at no cost to the State, to ensure that a highly skilled workforce is available to our signatory contractors.

Working in the Construction Industry is far different than other sectors of the economy. If our members don't work, they don't get paid. Consequently, members of our Union, like the other 13 Building Trade Unions, are often required to travel extensively to find work. Our members may be working on constructing a bridge in the Detroit area one month and could be working on a pipeline in Kalamazoo the next. In fact, many Laborers may work for multiple contractors throughout the year, and HB 5025 would only create confusion through increased bureaucratic hardship.

Unlike other Unions that have a captive audience in a plant, a school, or other place of work, jobsites for the trades are constantly moving. HB 5025 would require our members to comply with additional administrative paperwork simply to collect the dues needed to provide the services and training that they, and our contractors, have come to expect.

Finally and most importantly, please realize that our members simply want to work. They are not interested in having more government mandates just to ensure that they may continue to have a good job that pays a family wage with health and retirement benefits.

We hope you clearly understand our steadfast opposition to this legislation and will strongly consider placing additional bureaucratic requirements on people that are just trying to make a living.

Simply put, the Michigan Laborers' believe that this legislation does not create jobs and threatens our ability to provide the State with highly-skilled construction workers. We would like to ask the Committee members for a "no" vote on this controversial bill.

I would like to again thank the Committee for allowing me to address this issue. On behalf of the Michigan Laborers' and all skilled construction workers in this State, I ask for your opposition to this bill.

I am available to answer any questions that the Committee may have.