

# SUPPORT HB 1001 (TRAN) & SB 374 (BOYSKO)

## COLLECTIVE BARGAINING FOR PUBLIC EMPLOYEES

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### What is collective bargaining?

Collective bargaining is the process in which working people, through their unions, negotiate contracts with their employers to determine their terms of employment, including pay, benefits, hours, leave, job health and safety policies, ways to balance work and family, and more. Collective bargaining is a way to solve workplace problems.

**All Virginia workers should have the right to join a union and the right to collective bargaining**, so they have a voice at work. But right now, only a fraction of Virginia's public service workers like teachers, firefighters, and nurses have the right to negotiate for fair wages and safe working conditions.

**The right to bargain collectively for a contract is a better bargain for our public service workers, it's also a better bargain for our communities.** Our public workers know what they need to do for their jobs. We are all stronger and safer when teachers can negotiate for things like smaller class sizes, emergency responders can negotiate for things like more up-to-date equipment, and nurses can negotiate for things like better staffing ratios in hospitals.

**Until 2021, Virginia was one of only three states in the country with a blanket ban on public sector collective bargaining.** That legislation led to a surge of public sector workers winning collective bargaining rights in localities including Richmond, Alexandria and Charlottesville. We need to build on that to ensure all workers have a voice on the job.

**Legislation that went into effect in 2021 fell short in two critical regards:** 1) it denied collective bargaining rights to state workers and workers in localities controlled by anti-worker forces, and 2) it did not set up a Public Employees Relation Board (PERB) that would provide the infrastructure for a smooth bargaining process. HB 1001 and SB 374 expands collective bargaining rights to state workers and public workers in all localities as well as sets up a framework to support a fair and efficient collective bargaining process.

**Collective bargaining means a healthier state.** It gives nurses, senior and child support service workers, home health care workers, and firefighters the right to negotiate for better conditions, such as better staffing ratios in hospitals.

**Collective bargaining is an inexpensive way to better our communities.** It does NOT include any new tax increases for Virginia taxpayers. The bill sets up a mechanism for workers to bargain for a contract.

**Collective bargaining is popular.** A CNU poll shows 68% of Virginia's voters support the right of public service workers to join together for a better life and stronger communities.

### Collective bargaining in Virginia: The Background

The denial and outright ban of collective bargaining in Virginia is a vestige of slavery and Jim Crow laws and attitudes; meant to exclude people of color and women from having equal rights in the workplace—preventing workers from improving both their working conditions and their livelihoods for their families. The General Assembly banned public agencies from recognizing unions in response to Black nurses at UVA Hospital organizing in 1946. Ensuring that everyone has collective bargaining rights in Virginia is long overdue and presents the chance to turn the page on the era of discrimination and give all workers equal rights.

