



PROFESSIONAL FIRE FIGHTERS

O F N E W H A M P S H I R E

House Labor, Industrial and
Rehabilitative Services Committee
1 Granite Place
Concord, NH 03301

RE: Testimony in Opposition to HB 1704 permitting public employees to bargain individually with public employers without any intervention.

Chairman Creighton and Members of the Committee:

My name is Brian Ryll, and I am President of the Professional Fire Fighters of New Hampshire (PFFNH), representing more than 2,000 active and retired fire fighters, paramedics, and emergency dispatchers throughout the State of New Hampshire. I respectfully submit this written testimony in opposition to HB 1704-FN.

At the outset, I want to be clear: fire fighters, emergency medical personnel, and certain other public safety employees are expressly exempted from the provisions of this bill. However, the Professional Fire Fighters of New Hampshire strongly opposes it because of its sweeping and damaging implications for collective bargaining, worker protections, and organized labor across New Hampshire's public sector.

HB 1704 is framed as a "choice" bill, but in practice it is a direct attack on collective bargaining and the concept of exclusive representation that has governed public sector labor relations in New Hampshire for decades. Allowing individual employees to bargain separately from a certified bargaining unit undermines the fundamental purpose of collective bargaining: balancing the inherent power imbalance between employers and employees through unified representation.

This legislation is union busting in effect, regardless of how it is labeled. By encouraging individual bargaining outside of the collective process, HB 1704 weakens unions, fragments bargaining units, and erodes the ability of workers to advocate effectively for fair wages, benefits, and working conditions. History and experience show that when collective bargaining is diluted, wages stagnate, benefits erode, and workplace protections decline, not just for union members, but for all workers.

Even more concerning is the bill's punitive structure. HB 1704 criminalizes traditional labor activity by imposing Class A misdemeanor penalties for actions taken by employee organizations that are deemed to interfere with individual bargaining. This represents an unprecedented and dangerous escalation that treats labor advocacy as criminal conduct. Such provisions will have a chilling effect on lawful union activity and undermine the constitutional and statutory rights of working people.

In addition to harming workers, this model also destabilizes employer organizations. By encouraging individual employees to negotiate separately from their coworkers, HB 1704 invites internal competition, resentment, and division within the workforce. It creates an environment where employees are incentivized to undercut one another or bypass their union in pursuit of

individual advantage, rather than collaborate toward shared goals. That kind of fragmentation erodes morale, damages trust between management and employees, and makes it far more difficult for employers to manage their workforce consistently, fairly, and efficiently. Instead of dealing with one bargaining representative, employers would be forced to navigate a patchwork of individual arrangements, increasing administrative burden, legal exposure, and the risk of unequal or discriminatory treatment claims.

Although fire fighters are currently exempt, labor organizations understand that worker protections are rarely dismantled all at once. They are chipped away piece by piece. If the legislature is willing to weaken collective bargaining rights for one group of public employees today, it sets a precedent that could easily be expanded tomorrow. As a labor organization, we cannot stand by while the rights of fellow public employees are eroded.

Strong collective bargaining laws contribute to safer workplaces, more stable public services, and better outcomes for communities. Fire fighters know firsthand that well-trained, fairly compensated public employees lead to safer cities and towns. Undermining labor rights harms not only workers, but the public they serve.

For these reasons, the Professional Fire Fighters of New Hampshire respectfully urges the Committee to recommend HB 1704-FN as Inexpedient to Legislate.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our position.

Respectfully submitted,



Brian Ryll
President
Professional Fire Fighters of New Hampshire