



# Labor & Industry Committee

**State Representative Gerald J. Mullery**  
*Democratic Chairman*

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November 15, 2021

Dear Chairman Cox,

As the Democratic Chairman, and on behalf of the Democratic members of the House Labor and Industry Committee, I am submitting this letter, in addition to a letter from the CLEAR Coalition, to express our strong disappointment and dissatisfaction with the consideration of this package of bills. An agenda that shows no interest in the workers who choose to unionize, or the benefits derived from their collective power, is not a conversation that the Democratic members of this committee will entertain.

My members and I firmly believe in the committee process. Committee hearings are an important way to serve Pennsylvania and give voices to the working families that live in our districts. When done in good faith, the committee process can be a place where we tackle complex issues, ask difficult questions, and hear opposing views with the hope that we can ultimately put aside our differences and deliver real solutions to the problems facing our neighbors, families, and friends. It doesn't always work that way, unfortunately. Alternatively, the committee process can be made to serve the agenda of influential, out-of-state corporate lobbyists. It is evident that today's hearing only serves the latter, which is why we will not engage in this discussion beyond what is written in this letter.

This package of bills is not only an assault on worker rights, but it's also deeply out of touch with the priorities and needs of Pennsylvanians, particularly during this time of crisis. Over the past two years, we've watched Republicans in the General Assembly fight to take more control over the COVID-19 pandemic response and resulting economic upheaval, but with that power comes a responsibility to lead. Pennsylvania still faces real challenges getting our economy, schools, and supply chains back on track. But instead of addressing any number of those issues, this committee has decided to hold a hearing on a package of bills that would weaken public sector unions and the bargaining efforts of those who chose to join the union—many of whom are the front-line workers who have selflessly served our communities throughout this pandemic. We've done this exercise a few times before, so at this point everyone on the committee should know that no individual can legally be forced to join a union. Workers who choose to join deserve the opportunity to be part of a strong union without the government interfering to weaken their collective bargaining power. Further, the current wave of strikes across Pennsylvania and the United States prove that workers are eager to exercise their rights to demand better pay and working conditions. It's also telling that not only did the unions decline to appear before the committee to testify, but public employers declined as well. This leads us to believe that there's no appetite for this package of legislation, not from workers, not from employers, and not from the public.

I'm not aware of a single member who is hearing from many of their constituents about repealing maintenance of membership or any of the other proposals in these bills. Nobody is asking for this, except billionaires like the Kochs and their paid-for network of supporters. If this package of bills is a priority for the House Republican Caucus, we aren't just on opposite sides of the aisle—we're living in a completely different reality.

The most frustrating part about this agenda is that there are pressing issues that this committee has historically ignored and has continued to brush aside so far this session. As you will see in the CLEAR Coalition's letter as well as ours, the time to stand with workers is now. We ask that our Republican colleagues stop pretending that we can go about business as usual in the time of crisis and come to the table to advance the following:

- Addressing the growing shortage of teachers, substitute teachers, bus drivers, school nurses, paraprofessionals, and other education support personnel.
- Ensuring our health care facilities and nursing homes are safely and adequately staffed.
- Investing in our work force to keep our supply chain strong, especially those workers who are essential to our nation's food supply.
- Investing in the childcare sector so that everyone who wants to return to work can.
- Providing hazard pay for essential workers to attract and retain workers in these vital industries.
- Investing in physical improvements, maintenance, and repair of our school buildings, many of which are unsafe for teaching and learning.
- Fixing the broadband gap that exists between rural, suburban and city communities. This is a critical investment that will generate economic development, business expansion, and ensure that our children can access a 21<sup>st</sup> century education, no matter where they live.

Public policy is, by definition, what government chooses to do and what government chooses not to do. This committee has chosen to ignore the real issues that the majority of Pennsylvanians care about. Instead, we're wasting our time with what amounts to a Republican Policy Committee hearing. For those reasons, the Democratic members of this committee respectfully decline to engage any further in this conversation today. When this committee is ready to start working in a bipartisan fashion on the major issues we face, we're here and ready to have that conversation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "G Mullery", with a stylized, cursive script.

Gerald Mullery, Democratic Chairman  
Labor and Industry Committee  
Pennsylvania House of Representatives