

Chairman Cox, Chairman Mullery, and distinguished members of the Labor and Industry Committee, my name is Trent Bryden and I teach AP U.S. History, U.S. Government, and Logic classes. I'm a veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps and I've been a teacher for 16 years.

I have never been comfortable with the union in all my years as a teacher. I don't like the political philosophy or actions of the teachers' unions and I don't like how they shame teachers who do not want to give money to support their political causes. The breaking point for me came during Covid-19. I decided to resign from the union in 2020 because of the union's attempts to keep schools closed. I was very happy that my district carried on with in-person learning five days a week during the 2020-2021 school year, but the union went forward with that plan while kicking and screaming. We teachers could very clearly see the negative effects of remote learning on our students, and yet our union fought to keep kids out of classrooms.

I felt like I was jumping into an abyss when I decided to leave the union. I did not know how to resign from the union or what steps I should take, but thankfully I was able to find resources to help me through. I know many other teachers who would like to resign from the union, but the union makes it as difficult and confusing as possible in order to keep people from leaving. It shouldn't be like that. We should know our rights up front and the process to resign should be transparent and straightforward.

I am glad that I'm out of the union now. I felt uncomfortable being part of a political organization that I didn't agree with. I would like to see teachers and other public employees have greater control over their relationship with the union so they don't feel powerless. Many teachers think they have to stay in the union to keep their benefits, but I know that isn't true. I also agree that the government should not be collecting political contributions on behalf of the union. No other political organization gets that privilege. The union shouldn't either.

Thank you for this opportunity to share my thoughts with you.

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This written testimony is intended for the House Labor and Industry Committee's hearing on public sector union reform legislation on Monday, November 15, 2021.