

Amy Strum  
Bridgton  
LD 1756

Testimony Amy Strum RN LS1756-An Act To Protect Employee Freedom Of Speech. May 9, 2023 Good afternoon Senator Tipping and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing.

My name is Amy Strum. I have been a nurse for 33 years and I work at Maine Medical Center emergency department. I have been fortunate to have found and worked for the past 33 years in a profession that I love, nursing. I am a bedside nurse and a fierce advocate for patients and nurses. In 2000 I joined the campaign to unionize with my nurse colleagues at Maine Medical Center through SEIU. Maine Medical Center waged an expected anti-union campaign in an attempt to bust our right to organize. We did not win our union then, but we did in 2021 and again in 2022 with MSNA/NNU. I am now a proud union nurse.

My experience with my employer during both of these organizing campaigns was similar. During both, we faced an expensive, persistent, aggressive, and sometimes threatening effort by the hospital that included many strategies to intimidate us away from organizing. Maine Medical Center hired “union avoidance” consultants, or union busters to run their anti-union campaign. Today I would like to talk about my experience with one of the tactics utilized by the hospital and its consultants. The “captive audience meeting” these meetings are when management gathers employees in small groups to educate them about unions. At MMC both in the 2000 and in the 2021/22 campaigns nurses were taken off their shifts and away from their patients and mandated to attend these meetings and Zoom classes. We were also texted videos to our private phones, all in an effort to prevent unionization. In 2000. I remember having to sit through a video that showed the perils of working in a unionized pickle factory in the 1930s. During our recent campaign, we were mandated with a threat of disciplinary action to attend a Zoom “know your rights” meeting with the experts from Reliant Labor Consultants, an anti-union consulting firm hired by Maine Medical Center for over \$1 million. In these meetings, we were told of all the rights we would forfeit by joining a union. I did not want to listen to these false and coercive narratives and it should be my right not to be forced to do so. This is a right that is protected by the first amendment of our constitution, the freedom of speech. I hope you will protect workers' constitutional rights and support LD 1756. Thank you.