

From the Desk of  
**Rep. Margaret Doherty**

*Margaret Doherty*

# **Please Support HB 2544**



HB 2544 is an important part of rebalancing the power within collective bargaining between workers and their employers. Right now the process of expedited bargaining unfairly disadvantages workers and we need to level the playing field and let a neutral arbiter decide disagreements.

Contract negotiations between public employers and employees are hard and they take time and energy for both sides. They are also an opportunity to engage the frontline workers and bring issues to management to seek solutions. The problems come when one side can side step this process and then has a disproportionate amount of power. Expedited bargaining is one such side step. During the life of a contract, an employer has the exclusive power to make a change to policy that would be subject to bargaining but isn't exactly covered in the contract. They are able to make this change without the consent of the workers

How it works now:

- An Employer makes a change to a term of employment that would be a mandatory subject of bargaining but not in the contract.
- The union demands to bargain.
- They have 90 days to come to an agreement and the majority of times the employer just implements and the union has no real recourse.

What will change under HB 2544:

- After the 90 of negotiation without a resolution there will be 15 days of mediation
- If mediation doesn't resolve the issue it goes to a binding arbitration where a neutral arbiter decides between the two sides

We believe that with will lead to more reasonable resolutions while still having an avenue to deal with emergencies. Firefighters and law enforcement already have this process in place and since 2009 they have only gone to binding arbitration one time. These issues can be resolved but there must be binding arbitration at the end otherwise there is no incentive to be reasonable. The system right now is easy to abuse because there is no check on it. We want a fair system and one that allows workers a real voice.

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