

My name is Rebecca Riofrio. I'm an elected lead organizer for the New England Health Care Employees Union, District 1199/SEIU. I'm here today to speak in favor of Bill # H.B. No. 7326, An Action Concerning Captive Audience Meetings.

I have been with the union for 10 years and in that time I've had the opportunity to talk with hundreds of health care employees about their experience with captive audience meetings. It is said that people should not have to leave their constitutional rights outside their workplace door, but that is exactly what happens to healthcare workers everyday in our state.

Imagine, you are a nurses' aide at a nursing home or hospital. You are in the middle of caring for a patient. Maybe you're helping to feed a patient, bathing them, cleaning a bed sore or taking blood. Your supervisor comes into the room and taps you on the shoulder. She tells you to come to meeting a right away. You explain the obvious; you're in the middle of giving care. You ask what's it about, but your supervisor only says finish up and come right away.

You rush to the meeting thinking their must be some emergency and are joined by dozens of your coworkers. You wonder who's with the patients. Your administrator stands in front of the room and says that he's called people together because of a serious issue. He says that he's learned that the union is seeking to organize the employees and that he is against it goes on to explain why. He then shows film about the dangers of unionization. Someone raises their hand to ask a question. They're told there will be no questions at the meeting. Any questions should be raised with your supervisor. An hour later the meeting ends and you return to work shell-shocked.

Later that afternoon, your supervisor says she wants to see you in her office. This time you don't ask why. You walk in the nurse manager is sitting there. Your supervisor asks if you have any questions about the union. You say no and she begins you harangue you against the union while the nurse manager looks on. This goes on for a half and hour. And it's repeated every other day for the next two weeks.

This is conduct fitting a police state. No one should have to be subjected to this forced indoctrination because you have job -- whether its forced indoctrination about the union, or your religion, or even which political candidate to support. No one should be held captive by their employer just because they pay you. Health care workers are subjected to these kinds of meetings every day in our state and it's about time we tell employers that captive audience meetings have no place in a free society.