



**BLUEGREEN
ALLIANCE**



March 8, 2021

Dear Representative:

As a coalition of some of the nation's largest labor unions and environmental organizations, collectively representing millions of members and supporters, the BlueGreen Alliance and its partners write to express our support for the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act of 2021, H.R. 842.

In the United States, we face a critical juncture for the rights of employees to organize. Workers have faced wage stagnation, difficult working conditions, and a wholesale effort to decimate their ability to organize for the past several decades. Exploitation by employers of labor laws that have been made toothless has caused union membership to fall dramatically from 33 percent in 1956 to ten percent in 2018. As it stands, no meaningful penalties exist for corporations using illegal tactics to eliminate the option to organize. Workers, already facing record income inequality, now face job losses due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. And we know the reality is that we went into this pandemic with three ongoing interconnected crises: economic inequality, racial inequality, and climate change.

Based on the National Bureau of Economic Research's statistics, we know that unions consistently provide working Americans with ten to twenty percent higher wages than non-unionized workers. Workers who are union members fare better in crises—whether the crisis is COVID-19 or climate change. During crises, unionized workers have better access to enhanced safety measures, unemployment insurance, additional pay, paid sick time, and input in the terms of furloughs or other job-saving arrangements. Empowering workers, whether they are in the private sector or in the public sector, to band together to negotiate better wages and safer working conditions is the best path forward to protecting our workers and rebuilding America's middle class.

Organizing does not just affect job quality, though: unionized workers are better equipped to handle potentially hazardous workplace situations, and have more freedom to blow the whistle in dangerous situations. This can avert industrial accidents and result in safer communities, as well as cleaner air and water. Many unions also take firm positions on environmental issues because they understand the impact that clean air and water have on workers. Unions have supported the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, and other actions designed to both reduce the carbon pollution driving climate change and grow good-paying jobs in the clean economy. This bill can also help us close the gap in union density and job quality in our growing clean energy sectors.

The PRO Act empowers employees by strengthening workers' rights to bargain and to organize. It does so by ending prohibitions on collective and class-action litigation, prohibiting employers from permanently replacing striking employees, amending how employees are defined so that no one is misclassified as an independent contractor, strengthening remedies and enforcement for employees who are exercising their rights, creating a mediation and arbitration process for new unions, protecting against coercive captive audience meetings, and streamlining the National Labor Relations Board's procedures.

The PRO Act would take tangible steps to stem the tide of continued violations of the rights of working people to organize and would provide real consequences for those who violate the rights of workers. We must restore fairness to our economy so that workers no longer get a raw deal, and strengthen the right of workers all over the country to unionize and bargain for better working conditions. For these reasons, we urge you to vote yes on the PRO Act. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

BlueGreen Alliance
American Federation of Teachers
International Union of Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers
International Union of Painters and Allied Trades
League of Conservation Voters
National Wildlife Federation
Natural Resources Defense Council
Service Employees International Union
Sierra Club
United Steelworkers Union
Utility Workers Union of America