

**Opening Statement of Ranking Member Mark DeSaulnier (CA-10)**

Subcommittee on Health, Employment, Labor, and Pensions Hearing

*"Confronting Union Antisemitism: Protecting Workers from Big Labor Abuses"*

2175 Rayburn House Office Building

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Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to start by making clear that I condemn antisemitism and all forms of hate – whether it be in the classroom, in the workplace, or anywhere else. As Members of Congress and citizens, we have a responsibility to stand up against all forms of hate, regardless of the source or the political party.

And I agree that we should do more to combat antisemitism. No one should be threatened, harassed, or attacked because of who they are, who they worship, or what they stand for.

I look forward to the witnesses' testimonies – but we should avoid the broad-brush stereotypical attacks on workers' ability to organize and collectively bargain that have characterized the subcommittee's six prior anti-labor hearings, and – based on the title of today's hearing – I fear we'll hear again.

And just for the record, corporate interest is the wealthiest in America, and income inequality is the most intense in this country. Eclipsing the glided age is now the advantage of cooperation in the top 10 percent, 16 to 1. So when we talk about labor contributing to campaigns, they are being buried by corporate interest, particularly after the Supreme Court's *Citizens United* decision.

Immigrants, including Jewish immigrants, left their home countries – often under duress – and sought to build a better life and future for themselves and their families in the United States. Many immigrants opted to organize and join the labor movement because they understood what is still very true today – unions give workers a voice and have the power to transform their lives through collective action. That means elections. Union elections.

Throughout history, unions have been pivotal in advancing the conditions and rights of workers, from establishing the five-day work week to championing minimum wage laws, banning child labor, which is now under attack again, and protecting workers from being maimed and killed at work. Their advocacy, the union advocacy, has been instrumental in building and sustaining America's middle class. Which is now under attack.

At a time of extreme wealth inequality, workers are increasingly organizing because they recognize the collective and democratic power unions provide them in order to secure higher wages, better benefits, and safer workplaces. Union workers enjoy approximately 20 percent higher wages and are more likely to have access to essential benefits such as health insurance, paid leave, and defined-benefit pension plans. These gains not only benefit individual workers and their families but also contribute to a more robust economy where prosperity is more broadly shared.

Unions also create workplace democracy.

Unions are inherently small “d” democratic institutions. For example, workers need at least a majority of support in their workplace to form or join a union. Union workers need majority support to authorize a strike. They need majority support to ratify a contract. Workers are their unions, and unions are accountable to their members by a vote.

While the foundational principle of unions is rooted in majority rule, just like any democracy, our nation’s laws also protect the rights of individual workers. We are fortunate to have Dr. Anne Marie Lofaso as one of our witnesses today. Dr. Lofaso’s testimony notes that workers have multiple avenues to choose the level with which they wish to affiliate their unions. Union-represented workers have the right to resign from union membership, the right to object to dues beyond representational activities, known as the “Beck” right, and even the right to request a religious accommodation for nonpayment of union dues.

Unions are legally required to inform workers of their “Beck” rights and their equal rights and protections under Title I of the *Labor Management Reporting and Disclosure Act*. While employers are required to inform workers of their right to religious accommodations, beyond a basic flyer posted in the workplace, employers have no obligation to directly inform their workers of their rights to organize a union or come together with their coworkers to engage in concerted activity regarding the terms and conditions of their employment.

As we discuss these issues today, let us not forget that the true threat to workers’ freedom and rights is not their unions, but employer, bad employers, low road employers. intimidation and retaliation, as well as deficiencies in our labor laws to hold unscrupulous businesses – as I have said many times, it’s not a responsible business, but a few businesses that bring the whole culture down to us versus them. not all businesses, just the ones that don’t play by the rules – accountable for violations of the law. These include employers holding mandatory and coercive captive audience meetings, inadequate penalties for violating workers’ rights, and prolonged delays in justice for workers facing retaliation.

We must reaffirm our commitment to strengthening worker protections and advancing legislation such as the bipartisan *Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act*. This landmark legislation will modernize our labor laws for the first time in decades, empowering workers to organize freely and ensuring that employers are held accountable for their actions.

Lastly, we have a responsibility to fund the very agencies that enforce workers’ rights. We should make sure we are appropriately funding key agencies like the National Labor Relations Board and the EEOC so they can fulfill their vital mission to protect workers.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I yield back.