

“In the culmination of three years of dedicated organizing, a supermajority of Senate staff and an ever-growing number of House staff have firmly expressed the need to secure a safe and equitable workplace with a seat at the table through collective bargaining,” said **the Massachusetts State House Employee Union (MSHEU) organizing committee**. “We continue to see a path forward to the benefit of State House employees and the Commonwealth overall, and we are sincerely thankful to Senator Keenan and Representative Kearney for their stalwart leadership in the Legislature to support organized labor and staff. We remain steadfast in our belief that a unionized Legislative staff will ensure improvements in workplace conditions in both bodies that will be protected in the years to come.”

The ambiguity of the current law stems from the lack of inclusion or exclusion of legislative employees on the list of public employees permitted to unionize, whereas employees in the executive and judicial branches are distinctly included and elected officials are distinctly excluded. Along with defining legislative employees as public employees with the authority to collectively bargain, the bill would lay out parameters to exclude employees in certain offices including the Office of the Senate President and the Office of the Speaker of the House from collective bargaining. The bill would also direct the state ethics commission to determine what scenarios would create a staunch conflict of interest for public employees.

“In a democracy, people should have choices,” said **Myles J. Calvey, Business Manager of IBEW Local 2222**. “In a democracy, workers should have the choice of accepting or rejecting a union. This bill simply gives the legislative staff the right to make their choice.”

“On behalf of the Massachusetts AFL-CIO and our nearly half a million members across the Commonwealth, we are proud to continue to stand behind the Massachusetts State House Employee Union and the working people that make our government function,” said **Steven A. Tolman, President of Massachusetts AFL-CIO**. “In filing this important legislation, IBEW 2222 and the workers they represent are reaffirming that they deserve a voice in the workplace and a vote to join a union just like every other worker across our Commonwealth. We commend Senator Keenan and Representative Kearney for filing this important legislation and it is our sincere hope that each and every legislator stands in solidarity with these workers and votes to provide a path to a fair and equitable contract for the Massachusetts State House Employee Union.”

The filing of the legislation comes ten months after Senate staff announced their intent to unionize with IBEW Local 2222 and the successful collection of authorization cards from a majority of Senate staff. During a closed door meeting between Senate staff and Senate Counsel in July, staff were notified of the hurdle presented by current state law, but understood that it did not present a dead end.

Massachusetts Legislative staff join leagues of Legislative employees across the country in their endeavor to unionize, including efforts by congressional staffers and a successful push by Legislative staff in Oregon. Massachusetts Senate and House staff have cited a need to ensure a safe workplace free of discrimination and sexual harassment, month-one-of-employment health insurance coverage, measures to recruit, support, and retain a diverse workforce, comprehensive professional development opportunities, and a voice in matters concerning their workplace among other factors as their motivation for organizing.

The legislation will now await assignment to a committee for further consideration.

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