# NOTICE TO EMPLOYEES: Employer-Sponsored Meetings Communicating Opinions on Religious or Political Matters

**Employers: You must physically post a full-sized (at least 8 ½ x 11-inch) copy of this Notice where employee notices are customarily posted or in another place where all employees can easily see it. You must also provide all new employees with this Notice at the time of hire.**

## Employee Protections and Prohibited Actions

An employer or the employer's agent, representative, or designee may not discharge, discipline, or otherwise penalize an employee, threaten such actions against an employee, or fail or refuse to hire an applicant because the employee or applicant declines to attend, participate in, or listen to communications from the employer, their agent, representative, or designee in an employer-sponsored meeting during which the employer, their agent, representative, or designee, communicates their opinion regarding religious or political matters.

## Religious or Political Matters

- **"Religious matters"** means matters relating to religious belief, affiliation, and practice or the decision to join and support a religious organization or association.
- **"Political matters"** include matters relating to elections for political office, political parties, proposals to change laws, regulations, or public policy, or the decision to join or support a political party or potential civic, community, fraternal, or labor organization.

## Exceptions and Limitations

This law does not apply to an employer that:

- Is a religious organization or an entity exempt from federal or State employment discrimination protections;
- Is a political organization that requires its employees to attend employer-sponsored meetings or to participate in communications with the employer, their agents, or other representatives for the purpose of communicating the employer's political beliefs or purposes;
- Is an educational institution that requires a student or instructor to attend lectures on political or religious matters as part of the regular coursework at the institution;
- Is a nonprofit, tax-exempt training program that requires a student or an instructor to teach classroom instruction, complete fieldwork, or perform community service hours on political or religious matters that relate to the mission of the training program;
- Requires employees to undergo training to comply with federal or State law, including training related to the employer's obligations under civil rights law and occupational safety and health laws; or
- Is a government unit holding a new employee orientation.

An employer is not prohibited: (1) from communicating information required to be communicated by law; (2) from conducting a meeting that involves religious or political matters if attendance and participation are voluntary; (3) from communicating information that is necessary for employees to perform their jobs; (4) for an employer that is an institution of higher education or an agent or other representative or designee of the institution, from meeting or participating in communications with its employees that are part of coursework, a symposium, or an academic program at the institution; or (5) for an employer that is a governmental unit, from communicating information related to a policy or the employer or a law that the employer is responsible for administering.

This law does not prohibit or regulate employer speech. The law regulates when an employer may take action against an employee who declines to attend meetings in which the employer communicates its views on religious or political matters.

## Enforcement

If an employee believes that an employer has violated this law, the employee may file a written complaint with the Commissioner of Labor and Industry within 180 days of the violation.

If the Commissioner is unable to resolve through mediation and determines that the employer has violated this law, the Commissioner may assess a civil penalty of up to $10,000 for an initial violation and up to $25,000 for a subsequent violation, issue a cease and desist order, or award other relief including but not limited to reinstatement, injunctive relief, back pay and interest, and compensatory damages.

Maryland
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
DIVISION OF LABOR AND INDUSTRY

410-767-2227
410-767-2510 (se habla español)
WorkRights@maryland.gov
labor.maryland.gov/labor

**File a Complaint**
labor.maryland.gov/workerfreedomform

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