



Amalgamated Transit Union

Local 1093

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**Testimony before the House Elections Committee on HB 4230 and HB 4234
on behalf of the
Amalgamated Transit Union Michigan Legislative Conference
May 16, 2023**

Good morning Madam Chair and members of the committee. My name is Earl Cox, and I am the President of the Amalgamated Transit Union Michigan Legislative Conference. I am also the president of ATU Local 1093 in Kalamazoo. I am joined by Melvin Turnbo, president of ATU Local 876 in Grand Rapids. We represent thousands of public transit employees including bus drivers, maintenance mechanics and administrative staff in many of the state's larger public transit agencies and also a number of rural dial-a-ride operators. Thank you for the opportunity to speak this morning.

We are here in support of House Bills 4230 and 4234 which would remove prohibitions against the use of payroll deduction for purposes of collecting political action contributions. The ability to participate in campaign activities is a vital part of our democracy, and our members who choose to contribute to the union's political action efforts should be able to do so in the least burdensome way. These bills would reverse the barriers placed on union workers – and only union workers – and restore fairness to the system.

When these prohibitions were put in place several years ago, the proponents of the changes failed to apply them evenly – only workers were denied the ability to use payroll deduction for political action purposes. Employers, including some of Michigan's largest corporations that contribute millions to political parties and candidates, are still allowed to utilize payroll deduction to raise funds from their employees. Passing House Bills 4230 and 4234 will ensure that the system is fair for employers and employees.

Moreover, passage of these bills does not mean that employers will be forced to participate in payroll deduction for political contributions. Just like workers who must voluntarily choose to have a portion of their pay deducted for political action, employers must voluntarily agree to use the payroll deduction system to do so. We expect most employers to agree to these requests because the cost to them is virtually nonexistent. Even should there be a small amount of expense to the employer, we expect that the union would be willing to reimburse those costs. Long gone are the days when a payroll clerk would have to cut checks by hand and adjust each one according to any deductions that would be made. Computerized payroll systems make the use of payroll deduction for any number of purposes, including health care premiums, charitable contributions, or PAC deductions, seamless and automatic.

We have many members who want to participate in political action on behalf of the union. These bills will make it easier for them to do so, and will put workers on an even footing with their employers in how voluntary contributions can be collected. We respectfully urge support for HB 4230 and HB 4234.