



Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-3605

August 16, 2019

Dear Mr. Maritas,

Thank you for taking the time to contact my office about labor unions. I truly value the thoughts and concerns of my constituents and appreciate this opportunity to respond.

As the former District Attorney of Nassau County and as your Representative in Congress, I have always supported organized labor. From prosecuting labor law violators, to fighting for higher wages and better benefits, to combating outsourcing, I'm proud to advocate for all working families and union members.

Too often, employers exploit the weaknesses in federal labor laws to make it incredibly difficult, if not impossible, for workers to form a union. Barriers imposed by their employers are why union membership has decreased so drastically over the years. In 1956, union membership was 33 percent, compared to just 10 percent in 2018. We know that union members earn 13 percent more than their counterparts in non-union workplaces with similar occupations and similar experience and education. To properly address income inequality and wage stagnation, we need to empower workers to stand together and negotiate for their fair share.

That is why I'm proud to be an original cosponsor of H.R. 2474, the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act of 2019, which was introduced by Representative Bobby Scott (D-VA). H.R. 2474 would punish companies that violate workers' rights and strengthen protections for workers' right to organize and negotiate for safer working conditions, fair wages, and better benefits.

Another important component that is necessary for tackling wage inequality in this country is increasing the minimum wage. Congress has not raised the federal minimum wage in over 10 years. It is well past time that Congress acts to ensure that no individual working full time cannot afford to make ends meet. That is why I'm an original cosponsor of H.R. 582, the Raise the Wage Act, which would gradually increase the federal minimum wage from \$7.25 to \$15 an hour over a 6-year period. This legislation passed the House in July 2019 and is currently awaiting action in the Senate.

As you may know, I am also a proud cosponsor for H.R. 748, the Middle Class Health Benefits Tax Repeal Act of 2019. H.R. 748 would repeal the pending excise tax on high-benefit employer-provided health care plans. Also known as the "Cadillac tax," this policy would apply a 40 percent tax on the value of certain employer-provided health insurance plans. I am concerned that this tax would discourage

employers from offering robust health care costs for hard-working Americans, who will be forced to pay more out of pocket for their health care. This is especially problematic for those in high cost-of-living areas like Long Island where health care costs are greater. As such, I was proud to vote for this legislation, which passed the House with overwhelming support from both sides of the aisle, and hope to see the Senate take action and bring it up for a vote.

It is not enough to merely say we will support America's working families. We need to support them with laws that strengthen labor standards, ensure equal opportunities for women in the workplace, and expand access to quality jobs, affordable health care, and education so that all Americans can continue to compete and succeed in the 21st Century economy.

Thank you again for taking the time to be in touch. Please do not hesitate to contact my office in the future with questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Kathleen Rice".

Kathleen Rice

Member of Congress