



MARYLAND STATE & D.C. AFL-CIO

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**HB 374 – Maryland School for the Deaf – Professional Personnel and Staff – Service Designation, Assignment, and Placement in a Collective Bargaining Unit
House Appropriations Committee
March 1, 2022**

SUPPORT

**Donna S. Edwards
President**

Maryland State and DC AFL-CIO

Madam Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 374 – Maryland School for the Deaf – Professional Personnel and Staff – Service Designation, Assignment, and Placement in a Collective Bargaining Unit. My name is Donna S. Edwards, and I am the President of the Maryland State and District of Columbia AFL-CIO. On behalf of Maryland’s 340,000 union members, I offer the following comments.

HB 374 is an affirmation of our State’s values to encourage and empower workers to have a voice in discussing with employers their safety concerns, productivity, pay and benefits, and other working conditions. This is critically important with everything we have witnessed since March of 2020 and the COVID pandemic. *Fundamentally, this is enabling legislation. It does not mandate a union. It does not force any worker to join or oppose a union.* It simply allows workers to decide, for themselves, what their path forward will be.

The freedom to form and join a union is core to the U.N. Universal Declaration on Human Rights and is an “enabling” right—a fundamental right that ensures the ability to protect other rights.¹ HB 374 affords professional personnel and staff employed at the Maryland School for the Deaf the same rights that 30,000 other Maryland State employees currently enjoy: The right to make their own decision as to whether they want to organize and form a union. The same right to self-determination has been realized by thousands of professional personnel in schools around the State.

¹ <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

In an Executive Order signed early last year, President Biden reaffirmed the position of the United States on collective bargaining rights by stating “*It is also the policy of the United States to encourage union organizing and collective bargaining.*”² We believe that the State of Maryland should follow the lead of the United States and do the same

For freedom and equity, we ask for a favorable report on HB 374.

² <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/22/executive-order-protecting-the-federal-workforce/>