



MARYLAND STATE & D.C. AFL-CIO

AFFILIATED WITH NATIONAL AFL-CIO

7 School Street • Annapolis, Maryland 21401-2096

Balto. (410) 269-1940 • Fax (410) 280-2956

President

Donna S. Edwards

Secretary-Treasurer

Gerald W. Jackson

SB 170 - Energy Generation Projects - Required Labor Standards

Senate Finance Committee

February 9, 2023

SUPPORT

Donna S. Edwards

President

Maryland State and DC AFL-CIO

Madame Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 170. 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 300,000 union members, I offer the following comments.

As we move from a traditional energy economy to a clean energy economy it is vital that we are creating a policy and regulatory framework that ensures we are bolstering family-sustaining careers and not just creating dead-end jobs. We know that meeting Maryland's climate goals require expanding state electricity production by two to three times its current levels and expanding the grid's capacity by three to five times. This means a massive amount of work in energy generation over the coming decade. Renewable energy generation, transmission, and storage are the growth industries of the future. For these projects it is paramount that we apply labor standards. We must hold these new energy jobs to a high standard now, ensuring that we are setting up the next generation of workers to be as successful as the ones that precede them. Unfortunately not all of this work will be done by companies interested in creating high road jobs and careers for their workers. We already know first hand that some industries, like solar, have decided to focus on low-wage installation jobs and certificate training programs that offer no possibilities for career advancement.

SB 170 requires developers of new power generation projects to pay for and certify that their contractors and subcontractors are paying the prevailing wage rates on projects. This is essential to ensure that rate payer money and tax payer money is not being used to undermine the existing job standards of trained trades workers. Prevailing wage requirements do not even require workers to be members of a union or covered by a project labor agreement, it simply requires that employers pay fair wage rates in line with industry standards, preventing a race to the bottom on job standards and work quality.

We need to fight climate change and we need to create family-sustaining careers in clean energy. With SB 170 we have the opportunity to protect workers and their families, as we grow clean energy production in Maryland. We urge the committee to issue a favorable report on SB 170.