



MARYLAND STATE & D.C. AFL-CIO

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SB 33 - Election Law - Voting by Absentee Ballot - Prepaid Postage for Return of Ballots
Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
January 22, 2020

SUPPORT

Donna S. Edwards
President
Maryland State and DC AFL-CIO

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 33 - Election Law - Voting by Absentee Ballot - Prepaid Postage for Return of Ballots. My name is Donna S. Edwards, and I am the President of the Maryland State and DC AFL-CIO. On behalf of the 340,000 union members in the state of Maryland, I offer the following comments.

Removing barriers to voting is of paramount importance for a vibrant and functioning democracy. Under current law, a voter must pay for postage to return their absentee ballot, creating a monetary disincentive to vote. SB 33 corrects this by requiring local boards of election to provide pre-paid return envelopes for absentee ballots. To help defray the cost to the local boards, the State Board of Elections will pick up 50% through reimbursement.

SB 33 also provides the voter with a choice: to use the pre-paid envelope, as-is, or to provide their own postage, to lessen the cost for the local board of elections.

Eliminating any barrier to voting, while giving voters more choices, and requiring the State Board of Elections to pick up half the cost, is the right thing to do. Unions support all efforts to expand voting rights to more citizens, and to remove existing barriers to voter participation.

We ask for a favorable vote on SB 33.