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**HB 426 - Department of Legislative Services - Voting by Mail - Study
House Rules and Executive Nominations Committee
February 24, 2020**

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 supporting HB 426 - Department of Legislative Services - Voting by Mail - Study. My name is Donna S. Edwards and I am the President of the Maryland State and District of Columbia AFL-CIO. On behalf of the 340,000 union members I offer the following comments.

Unions have supported efforts to institute a Vote by Mail (VBM) system in Maryland for several years. The effect it would have on voter turnout is incredibly positive and undeniable. In 1996, Oregon saw a turnout of 59%, compared with their most recent turnout for a Presidential election in 2016 – after Vote by Mail had been instituted – of 86%¹. Instituting VBM in Maryland would be one of the most effective ways to engage voters and to increase voter participation in our elections.

Opponents of VBM have raised concerns that the system would be expensive, difficult to implement, and would potentially create security issues. While we disagree on all of those points – and can provide ample evidence to the contrary from States that currently use VBM – it would be incredibly helpful to have a definitive study completed by the Department of Legislative Services, as a reference point for future conversations regarding VBM

That study from DLS – that HB 426 requires to be completed by December, 2020 – will delve into every facet of VBM, including fiscal, security, and legal issues, allowing Maryland to design and implement a VBM program that fits our State and eliminates any concerns that opponents may have. We want to ensure secure elections while engaging more voters and increasing voter participation. HB 426 starts us on the path to creating a secure and fiscally responsible VBM program for our State.

We ask for a favorable report on HB 426.

¹ Oregon Secretary of State's Office