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HB 37 – References to Absentee Voting in Communications - Mail-in Voting House Ways and Means Committee February 16, 2020

SUPPORT

**Donna S. Edwards
President
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Madam Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 37 – References to Absentee Voting in Communications - Mail-in Voting. 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.

At least 21 States have provisions allowing certain elections to be conducted by Mail-in vote. Oregon, Washington, Colorado, and Hawaii hold all elections by mail, although this does not preclude in-person voting opportunities on Election Days.

HB 37 is a simple change of language that will, in no way, affect State or local spending. By changing all references of mail-in voting from “absentee” to “mail-in”, Maryland can better communicate to voters that there are no pre-conditions on voting by mail. Currently, a perception still exists, among many voters, that an excuse of some sort is necessary, in order to vote by mail (travelling on Election Day, unable to get to the polling location due to disability or infirmity, etc.).

We need to dispel the notion that voting by mail requires a justification, and by removing references to “absentee”, it can only help with educating voters on the unencumbered freedom that exists for them to exercise their right to vote.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on HB 37