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Testimony House Bill 894 Education - Community Colleges - Collective Bargaining SUPPORT

AFSCME Council 67, representing Community Colleges employees currently at Baltimore, Prince George's, and Montgomery Counties, stand in support of HB894 which authorizes employees all at Maryland's Community Colleges the opportunity to form, join, and participate in employee organizing and other activities related to collective bargaining. The bill strikes a proper balance between an employee's rights to organize, while ensuring that everyone in the bargaining unit has a vote on determining whether to participate.

Through the collective bargaining process working people through their unions negotiate contracts with their employers to determine their terms of employment, including pay, benefits, hours, leave, job health and safety policies, ways to balance work and family, and more. Collective bargaining is a way to solve workplace problems. It is also the best means for raising wages in America.

By granting all employees collective bargaining at Maryland's Community College you are providing hard-working employees an opportunity to be a partner in enriching their work environment. During the pandemic, our members at community colleges stood ready to service helping to make our community colleges safer. Having the ability to give input on how to make the college and themselves safe from COVID 19, was due to already having in place workplace safety committees. Those committees were created through collective bargaining.

There are many other of examples of how collective bargaining has strengthen the workplace. In Chicago, the union representing garbage collectors saved the city \$7 million by identifying more efficient truck routes. In California and New York, unionized health care workers in the two largest municipal health systems in the country worked with employers to institute quality and efficiency improvements that resulted in increased patient satisfaction and shorter wait times, lower asthma readmission rates among children, and improved workplace safety.

The essence of what labor unions do give workers a stronger voice in their workplace. We believe that all employees should have the right to decide whether they want to join a union. This bill is the first step in granting them that right.

For these reasons, AFSCME Council 67 asks for a **FAVORABLE** report on HB894.