



MARYLAND STATE & D.C. AFL-CIO

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**HB 837 – Collective Bargaining – Teachers at the Maryland School for the Deaf –
Separate Bargaining Unit
House Appropriations Committee
February 10, 2021**

SUPPORT

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

Madam Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 837 – Collective Bargaining – Teachers at the Maryland School for the Deaf – Separate Bargaining Unit. 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, I offer the following comments.

Two years ago, this Committee passed a bill, which placed teachers at the School for the Deaf within the State Personnel Management System, effectively making them State Employees. It was necessary to take this measure, because, while informally given a better employment status than “at-will”, they still did not enjoy the same protections under Maryland law that are afforded to other employees in the Professional Service category of the State Personnel Management System (SPMS). The bill eventually passed the full General Assembly and became law in May of 2019, extending these protections to teachers at the Maryland School for the Deaf.

Now it is time to grant these same workers the right to collectively bargain for their pay and benefits, just like State Employees and Employees of the State Board of Education. HB 837 is the enabling legislation to do so. In a recent Executive Order, President Biden reaffirmed the position of the United States on collective bargaining rights by stating “*It is also the policy of the United States to encourage union organizing and collective bargaining.*”¹ We believe that the State of Maryland should follow the lead of the United States and do the same for the teachers at the Maryland School for the Deaf.

We ask for a favorable report on HB 837.

¹ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/22/executive-order-protecting-the-federal-workforce/>