



MARYLAND STATE & D.C. AFL-CIO

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**HB 685 – Labor and Employment – Secure Maryland Wage Act
House Economic Matters Committee
February 9, 2021**

SUPPORT

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

Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 685 – Labor and Employment – Secure Maryland Wage Act. 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.

A dedicated and well-trained workforce at BWI, the Port of Baltimore, and Penn Station is paramount to ensuring Maryland's security. These ports of entry for people and products present an opportunity for those who would wish us harm, and if not for the front-line attentive workers at these locations, nefarious plans would be successful. For us to attract and retain a talented workforce in our most secured locations, we must provide them with pay and benefits to get them and keep them.

HB 685 is not a new idea. Municipalities and States have passed similar legislation to increase pay and benefits for workers at heightened security locations. From LAX to JFK, from Dulles to Reagan, legislators have seen the need to give workers a boost in salaries to recruit and retain dedicated workers at locations that require increased vigilance and awareness. This bill pegs the wages and benefits to the Guard I classification for the applicable County under the McNamara-O'Hara Service Contract Act.

Fundamentally, workers that must pass a background check and receive special training deserve to be paid more. We value their expertise on the job, but we must also value the force-multiplying effect that increased wages and benefits have on keeping these dedicated workers above the poverty line and able to focus on potential security threats at Maryland's largest ports of entry. HB 685 is good for workers and good for the security of our State.

We ask for a favorable vote on HB 685.