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SB 683 – Election Law – Permanent Absentee Ballot List Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee March 3, 2021

SUPPORT

**Donna S. Edwards
President
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Good afternoon, Chair Pinsky, and members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony supporting SB 683 – Election Law – Permanent Absentee Ballot List. 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.

SB 683 is a commonsense voting reform that creates a smooth and easy process for voters to vote by mail. Instead of having to request an absentee ballot, for every election – and needing to know the start and stop dates for making the request – voters could ask to be placed on a permanent list for all future elections to vote by mail.

Considering the unprecedented election last year and the challenges faced by county boards of election with respect to the widespread use of mail-in ballots, it makes sense to set up a process to administer the vote-by-mail program more easily and with greater predictability. Removing a large portion of voters from having to request their mail-in ballot, knowing that it will be mailed to them, reduces the number of steps it takes to vote, lessening the load on both the voters who choose to be placed on the permanent absentee ballot list, as well as the county boards and the State boards who must process all of the requests.

SB 683 is reversible for the voter, as well. If they no longer wish to vote absentee, they can request to be removed from the Permanent Absentee Ballot List. Therefore, no one is stuck in one form of voting or another. They have the freedom to choose which style of voting they like best, and, more importantly, they have the freedom to change their mind.

We ask for a favorable report on SB 683.