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**Written Testimony Submitted to the
Maryland Senate Finance Committee
SB 710 - State and Local Government and Private Employers – Teleworking
February 25, 2021**

SUPPORT

Chair Kelley and members of the committee. On behalf of the American Federation of Teachers - Maryland (AFT-Maryland), which represents more than 20,000 state, county and municipal government employees, educators, and healthcare workers across Maryland, I urge you to support SB 710 - State and Local Government and Private Employers – Teleworking.

On November 10, 2020, the governor ordered the state to “immediately execute a period of mandatory telework across state agencies, except for essential, direct public-facing services and other essential personnel.”

However, many state employees were not permitted to convert to teleworking, and were required to work in-person, despite not being in public-facing services, or in positions with an essential designation. In many cases, employees were told they were now considered “essential,” despite that designation having no relevance to the pandemic emergency faced by the state.

The health and well-being of government employees and for all the citizens of the state are not served by forcing in person work and random exclusion from the governor’s mandatory telework order. AFT-MD agrees that the physical presence of certain employees is necessary, however, the current practice of using irrelevant emergency or essential designations to determine eligibility for mandatory telework is not justified.

It is apparent the state needs guidance from the legislature regarding telework. HB 73 will require the state to adopt telework policies and guidelines each year and to report to the legislature the number of employees participating in the telework program.

We ask this committee for a favorable report on SB 710. Thank you.

Marietta English
President