



MARYLAND STATE & D.C. AFL-CIO

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HB 656 – Election Law – Early Voting Centers – Accessibility by Public Transportation House Ways and Means Committee February 9, 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 HB 656 – Election Law – Early Voting Centers – Accessibility by Public Transportation. 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.

Organized Labor supports all efforts to make voting easier for Americans. Removing hurdles and barriers to voting for more people should be the continuing mission of all of us. Voters come from all walks of life and some face challenges that we have never seen. We need to meet the voters where they are, to ensure that they have every available opportunity to vote.

HB 656 is simple and straightforward: In any county with a fixed route public transportation service, all Early Voting Centers must be no more than 500 feet away from a public transportation station or stop. This ensures that voters who are dependent on public transportation, have the accessibility they need to exercise their franchise to vote. If they do not want to vote-by-mail, or they cannot take time off from work on Election Day, they now have an expanded opportunity to cast their vote during the Early Voting period, at an EV Center that will be located within walking distance of a transit stop.

We must expand opportunities to vote and remove barriers from voting, for all Marylanders. **We ask for a favorable vote on HB 656.**