



MARYLAND STATE & D.C. AFL-CIO

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HB 458 – State Personnel – Collective Bargaining – Revisions and Budget Bill Appropriations House Appropriations Committee February 15, 2022

SUPPORT

Donna S. Edwards

President

Maryland State and DC AFL-CIO

Madam Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 458 – State Personnel – Collective Bargaining – Revisions and Budget Bill Appropriations. 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.

Under current law, when the Governor and State Workers reach an impasse in bargaining, the Governor can simply choose to ignore the process and appropriate funds for workers based on a previous contract. In theory, any Governor could completely bypass the negotiations process and leave workers in the lurch for the entirety of his/her term in office. It creates a perverse incentive for a Governor to do nothing, stalling negotiations indefinitely while workers' wages and benefits remain stagnant for years.

HB 458 addresses this glaring hole in the negotiations process by sending a referendum to the voters, to decide if state workers should be able to use binding arbitration – like millions of unionized workers currently have in their CBA's. This constitutional change, when approved by the voters, will provide balance in the negotiations process, giving both parties every incentive to work toward a timely agreement.

Workers deserve balance and timely decisions. Establishing a binding arbitration process where both the union representative and management representative are participating in the arbitration provides relatively equal bargaining power and provides an incentive for both parties to reach an agreement without invoking binding arbitration. And by putting the conditions of the memorandum of understanding directly into the budget, we ensure that what has been negotiated and agreed upon, is honored. This bill is a fair and balanced approach to providing effective and efficient negotiations for our state employees, and we **urge a favorable vote on HB 458.**